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Political Stability and Security in West and North Africa

Highlights from the conference

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This report is based on the views expressed during, and short papers contributed by speakers at, a conference organised by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service as part of its academic outreach program. Offered as a means to support ongoing discussion, the report does not constitute an analytical document, nor does it represent any formal position of the organisations involved. The conference was conducted under the Chatham House rule; therefore no attributions are made and the identity of speakers and participants is not disclosed.

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The conference and its objectives

On 4 and 5 December 2013 and in partnership with the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) hosted a two-day conference on West and North Africa as part of its Academic Outreach program. Conducted under Chatham House rule, the event provided an opportunity for the presenting specialists and other participants to examine some of the drivers of political stability and security in the region.

The West and North Africa conference welcomed an impressive roster of researchers from North America, Africa and Europe. The papers contained in this conference report reflect the views of those independent scholars and analysts, not those of CSIS. The Academic Outreach program at CSIS, established in 2008, aims to promote a dialogue between intelligence practitioners and outside experts from a variety of disciplines and cultural backgrounds working in universities, think tanks and other research institutions in Canada and abroad. It may be that some of our academic interlocutors hold ideas or promote findings that conflict with our own views and analysis, yet it is for this reason that there is value in the conversation.

Executive Summary

North and West Africa have experienced a string of explosive developments in the last 3 years. Northern and central Nigeria became the targets of a rising tide of attacks claimed by Boko Haram and its acolyte, Ansaru. Northern Mali fell into the hands of separatist and jihadist forces and, for the first time, the insurgency threatened the stability of neighbouring states. The Libyan state has been unable to re-establish its monopoly over the use of force following the violent overthrow of Gadhafi. A break-away faction of Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), a pivotal component of the region's jihadist network, conducted a spectacular attack on the In Amenas gas complex in Algeria, claiming a high number of Western and Algerian victims. Moreover, segments of Tunisia's disaffected youth are increasingly attracted to the Al-Qaeda (AQ) narrative, in the aftermath of the fall of the Ben Ali regime. Some students of the region are raising the spectre of an "Afrighanistan" on Europe's southern flank.[1]

On 4 and 5 December 2013, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service co-hosted with the UK's Cabinet Office a two-day conference to shed further light on the drivers of growing insecurity in this resource-rich area and their impact in shaping the threat environment in the coming years for the region and Western interests. A multidisciplinary group of twenty-two experts from Canada, the US, Europe and Africa came together to unpack the socio-economic, political and ideological forces at play. They also focused their attention on the exogenous factors at work and the particular dynamics within the extremist forces that will help determine whether they become further entrenched in this chaotic neighbourhood.

Conference Findings

Viewing the region through different prisms, one sees emerging a kaleidoscope of overlapping ethnic, linguistic and religious identities that point to a multi-layered reality. However, these countries also share a number of common challenges that severely impede their capacity to cope with the aftershocks of the string of revolutions commonly referred to as the "Arab Spring". In a number of countries, state institutions are fragile. Their legitimacy is sapped by graft and powerful transnational trafficking networks that carve out border areas as their own domain and collaborate with AQIM and other extremist forces to further their respective agendas. Authorities are

therefore ill-equipped to cope with the pressures generated by rapid urbanisation and the rising expectations of a very young population where large numbers below the age of 25 exist on the periphery of the national economy. Added to this mix is a changing religious landscape where the growth of Salafism, a fundamentalist school of Islam, is fuelling the sectarian divide and furthering ethno-cultural rivalries within and across geographical borders.

The region of West and North Africa lacks a shared institutional framework to address these transnational challenges. Existing organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the General Staff Joint Operations Committee (CEMOC) do not have the tools to do so. Created in 2010 to coordinate the intelligence and military efforts against AQIM of Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania, CEMOC remains toothless. Likewise, ECOWAS continues to struggle to broaden its economic mandate to include the security dimension. As demonstrated in the case of Mali, the intervention of France, a former colonial power, was required to supplement the ECOWAS efforts to cope with an emergency situation that could also engulf its neighbours. The regional powerhouse that could be Nigeria remains side-lined, weakened by an Islamist insurrection, a political class that has lost confidence in the way the country is governed and widespread corruption. In addition, Nigeria faces the ever-present threat of a resurgent insurgency in the Niger Delta, should the 2015 presidential elections bring about a transfer of power from the South's Christian president Goodluck Jonathan to the predominantly Muslim North.

Algeria is also taking on a higher profile in support of regional stability. The attack on its gas facilities in early 2013 underscored its own vulnerability to the expanding terrorist movement and the need to rethink a counter-terrorism strategy focused until now on "quarantining" the Algerian-led AQIM and its followers at the limits of its southern borders and in neighbouring territories. The country is still haunted by the ghosts of its own civil war in the 1990s and there is little support for recourse to violence to challenge an unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. However, the regime is aware of a growing social malaise. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Malian crisis, Morocco, Algeria's traditional rival, has stepped to the fore, helping to build counter-terrorism capacity in Mali and hoping to play the Touareg card to counter Algiers's call for the independence of the Moroccan protectorate of Western Sahara.

Competition between Rabat and Algiers on the Malian front could become an additional factor destabilising a country that is profoundly scarred by this most recent insurgency and at a loss as to how to move forward. For the first time in the history of the rebellions launched by the Touareg—who represent some 30% of the population, unevenly distributed throughout the north—Islamist extremists were able to superimpose their own agenda upon traditional claims, and capitalise upon the free flow of arms and returning Touareg fighters left rudderless after the fall of Gadhafi to establish a reign of terror in northern Mali. There is no common ground for a post-conflict dialogue. Bamako is painting the struggle in strongly racial terms as one of pale-skinned Touareg against the black population. The majority in the north and south has little appetite for the horse-trading that brought back traditional leaders into the system in the past. The rise of a hard-line, independence faction of young Touareg militants within the National Liberation Movement of Azawad (MNLA) is further sapping the negotiating power of a traditional leadership wracked by internal divisions. While the Islamist forces of Ansar Dine and AQIM's Sahel branch, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), suffered significant losses during the French-led Operation Serval in 2013, the unresolved issues that triggered the uprising could add to the appeal of their radical narrative in the future.

Jihadists have also expanded their foothold in Tunisia, Libya and Niger, which has become the staging ground for a smaller but worrisome number of attacks by Mokhtar Belmokhtar's break-away faction of AQIM in association with MUJAO. Cameroon has not escaped unscathed, with lucrative kidnappings of Westerners carried out by AQ affiliates within its border area. In the last two years, Mauritania has successfully held the threat at bay; long a staging ground for jihadist activity, it has been temporarily spared, following a successful counter-terrorism campaign against AQIM. In addition to the groups referred to earlier, other pillars of the jihadist architecture include elements within Libya's Islamist Ansar Al-Sharia militia, as well as Tunisia's own Ansar Al-Sharia.

As noted, French intervention successfully rolled back jihadist advances in Mali in the first quarter of 2013, killing a number of its leaders and fighters and forcing others to seek refuge in border areas. Operation Serval was also successful in disrupting some jihadist links to the lucrative trafficking network. This success, however, could prove

to be temporary as the jihadist network re-adjusts its objectives to the new geopolitical reality and taps into festering social tensions. AQIM has time and again demonstrated its resilience, drawing strength from its successful integration into the social fabric of the ungoverned border areas over the last decade. Many of its members, like those of its associated groups, have melted into the local population, waiting for foreign troops to withdraw. Already, there are indications that the network is coming back to life. Its members can count on the countries of refuge not to pursue an aggressive counter-terrorism effort, lest such measures trigger retaliatory strikes on their own territory. In addition, some jihadists' continued association with traffickers and their own well-honed kidnapping skills open the way to important sources of financing.

Another factor of turbulence on the horizon is the return of jihadist fighters from Syria, which has become a magnet for radicalising youth across the region, and Tunisia in particular. As underscored by the return of Touareg fighters from Libya following Gadhafi's overthrow, the destabilising effect of battle-hardened young fighters who have adopted AQ's worldview can be considerable. Tunisia's Ansar Al-Sharia can already count on a nucleus of core fighters who have sharpened their skills in battles against the Ben Ali regime, Gadhafi and the Malian state. It can now look forward to the return of many of the over 2000 young Tunisians who are fighting next to Jabhat Al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), some of the most radical of anti-Assad forces who have forged strong links with, or are an integral part of, the international AQ movement.

To build on the gains of the French military intervention in Mali, conference participants recognised the need for a coordinated counter-terrorism strategy across the region. However, they also warned that an exclusive focus on the security dimension will fail in the medium to long term. Only a multi-layered response that seeks to address socio-economic disparities, political marginalisation and institutional weaknesses undermining the resilience of these societies can hope to dampen the attractiveness of the AQ narrative.

Of the Spread of Salafism in West Africa

Salafi-jihadism in West Africa has deep theological and social roots, stretching back, according to contemporary perceptions, even to the pre-colonial period, and including prominent jihadists such as Shaiku Usuman Dan Fodio, founder of the Sokota Caliphate in 1809. Salafism can be defined in five points:

1. A protestant view of the holy text and a concurrent reluctance to use the *hadith* (tradition) literature;
2. A creedal religion which stresses correct belief (as opposed to classical Sunnism which stresses correct practise), and enables the believer to practise takfir (labelling apparent Muslims non-Muslims, legitimising their murder);
3. A hostility towards Sufism and syncretistic versions of Islam;
4. A cyclical vision of history, in which the only periods of Muslim history which are important are the period of the Prophet Muhammad's life and the present end-times period; and
5. A fixation upon the polarising doctrine of *al-wala wa-l-bara* (love and hatred on the basis of perceived connection to Islam).

Salafism has several principal access points into West Africa: ideological, through education; financial, through the power of Islamic NGOs (primarily financed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states); and personal, through drawing what are effectively Salafist refugee fighters from other parts of the Muslim world.

Education as the means by which Salafism enters West Africa (and other places in the Muslim world) is the most common method. Its prevalence stems from the fact that in Islam the centre—the Middle East—has more prestige than does the periphery or all of the other cultural regions of Islam. Practically speaking, there is a long tradition of West African Muslims seeking education in either Cairo (Al-Azhar University) or Morocco going back centuries. Although both of these regions are still appealing, there are at least four other foci: Saudi Arabia, especially the universities associated with Mecca and Medina; Sudan, mainly the International University of Africa; madrasas in Mauritania; and, for some, Islamic universities in Iran. Salafism is obviously concentrated upon the graduates of the first two, although some Africans are converted to Shia radicalism in Iran as well.

Salafist education has practical ramifications in West Africa: it raises the religious and social prestige of the younger generation (...)

Salafist education has practical ramifications in West Africa: it raises the religious and social prestige of the younger generation who come back from the Arab Middle East knowing Arabic (which in itself commands prestige), and positions them in opposition to their elders who practise a Sufi interpretation of Islam. Salafist education also has ramifications for communities of other faiths because Saudi Salafism is starkly intolerant of not only Sufism, but also any accommodation with Christianity as well.

Future prospects

Salafism will continue to spread in West Africa and has not yet peaked. From an ideological and religious point of view, Salafism and Salafism-jihadism represent a radical or violent alternative to the status quo in every country which contains a substantial body of Muslims. In West Africa the possibilities of division between Muslims and Christians, or between Christian and secular elites have not yet been fully tapped. In almost every country there is Muslim resentment of domination by those elites, whether they are from a Christian majority, or Muslim (usually Sufi) majority. Salafism, and most especially Salafi-jihadism, can be an excellent vehicle by which to channel those frustrations. One should expect to see movements other than Boko Haram, Ansaru, MUJAO and the Ansar Dine emerge in the near future.

However, it should also be noted that Salafism-jihadism can carry within it the seeds of its own destruction. If one looks at the Algerian experience beginning in 1991, there legitimate grievances shared by the majority of the population resulted in apparent support for an Islamist alternative, which was rejected by the elites (and outside governments). This led to violence and terrorism which triggered a loss of popular support. Somalia followed a similar trajectory, one which could be reproduced in Nigeria and Mali.

Salafism is not a belief system that allows for compromise, and because of its hostility towards

traditional forms of Islam and other faiths, it is peculiarly ill-suited to make the necessary compromises to achieve and maintain power. It usually quickly alienates populations which come under its domination.

Boko Haram in the near future will move away from its Nigeria-focused campaign and come to operate in neighbouring countries which are weaker—the suspicion is that it is already doing so in the Central African Republic. This should not be taken to mean that it will abandon its base in northeastern Nigeria, where it has a following, but that effectively the Nigerian army has boxed Boko Haram in, and that there is no way currently for it to carry out major operations beyond the states of Borno and Yobe, other than in Kano. It would make sense for the group now to take advantage of the weakness of neighbouring states, which are mostly divided along religious lines. This expansion would demonstrate Boko Haram's transition from a local to a trans-national Salafist-jihadist group.

Tunisia: Radicalisation, Political Polarisation and Consequences for the Region

Youth marginalisation and radicalisation

When Tunisia's first free and fair elections were celebrated internationally as an "Arab Spring" success story, little attention was drawn to the fact that only 27% of the youth voted. Many young people were disillusioned by politics and felt that neither the internally quarrelling secular parties, nor the Islamist alternative, Ennahda, addressed their concerns—as indicated by the parties' failure to integrate young people. Indeed, while 50% of the population is younger than 30, only 4% of deputies in the elected Constituent Assembly fall within this age category, leading many young people to accuse their leaders of having "hijacked" the revolution.

Adding to this political marginalisation is economic hardship, which has hit Tunisia's young people hardest. Shortly after the fall of the Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali regime in January 2011, an opinion survey found that most young Tunisians expected their situation to improve within the next two years. Yet almost three years after the revolution, university students have the highest unemployment rate in the country. At the moment, around 34% of university graduates are without a job—almost 10% more than before the revolution. This is closely linked to another emerging problem, namely that an increasing number of young people fail to graduate. Students fail to show up during classes and exams, convinced that a university degree will not get them a job.

In such a context, young Tunisians become particularly susceptible to criminal activities, as well as to radical Islam. Indeed, most of Tunisia's Salafists, including those of the violent jihadi trend, are under the age of 30, and their numbers are steadily increasing. Yet, the causes behind the rise of Salafism in Tunisia are complex and involve other domestic and more regional developments. For example, the newly gained liberties following the revolution enabled preachers, often from Saudi Arabia, to come to Tunisia to spread their ultra-conservative beliefs. Moreover, Tunisia's interim government of Béji Caid Essebsi freed all political prisoners, including about 300 experienced Salafist jihadists.

Amongst them was Abou Iyadh, who upon his release from prison founded Tunisia's most prominent Salafist platform, Ansar al-Sharia

(AST). AST grew quickly in size and attracted around 5,000 people during its first congress, held in May 2012 in Kairouan. It has focused its activities primarily on *dawa*, the preaching and dissemination of Islam, as well as on charity activities. Although its leaders and some of its members share a belief in jihad, Abou Iyadh has repeatedly stressed that Tunisia is not a land of jihad. Instead, he has openly supported jihad in other countries in the region.

Many young Tunisians fought in the war against Colonel Gadhafi, providing them with training and weapons that were often smuggled through the border into Tunisia. The French intervention in Mali also led some Tunisians to fight on the side of Touareg separatists and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)-linked Islamist rebels. When they were pushed out of northern Mali, some fighters left for Tunisia, where they hid in the al-Chaambi mountains, as well as in the el-Kef governate. Syria, however, acts at present as a more attractive magnet and an estimated 2,000 Tunisians are fighting against the Assad regime, often alongside the al-Nusra Front.

The February and July 2013 assassinations of Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi—both political opposition figures who fiercely criticised the Islamist-led government—have been the immediate result of this radicalisation process and in particular the alignment of domestic and regional jihadist forces. Many of the people allegedly involved in the assassinations had received training abroad before supporting the jihadist cause on Tunisian soil. Similarly, the mode of operation (MO) used in the bloody killing of security forces over the past months reminds one of the MO used by radical Islamists with links to Al-Qaeda.

Political polarisation and the rise of secular parties

The responsibility for these developments has been largely placed on Ennahda. Most opposition parties, secular-oriented Tunisians and even some Islamists blame Ennahda for supporting the rise of Salafism in Tunisia. Some people have even tried to link Ennahda directly to the assassinations, such as the Independent Committee for the Assassination of Chokri Belaid, which was established shortly after the first assassination by people close to Belaid. They also blame Ennahda for supporting a religious hardening after the revolution and prioritising dialogue with ultra-conservatives, instead of confronting them. Many Tunisians also accuse some members of the ruling party

of having entertained close relations with the Salafists, including some jihadists now linked to the assassinations.

Thus, Ennahda's decision to classify AST as a terrorist organisation, following alleged links of some of its members to the assassinations, was made under fierce pressure by the opposition parties. In the wake of the assassinations, the latter united under the Popular Front, the Union for Tunisia and the National Salvation Front, calling for the fall of the government. Divided internally between a dogmatic and a more pragmatic wing, many members of Ennahda were fiercely opposed to the classification of AST as a terrorist organisation. Ennahda's doctrinal wing accused its leaders of cracking down on a largely peaceful Islamist movement in the same way as Ben Ali had done in the 1990s, arguing that this will only result in its further radicalisation. Indeed, following the classification of AST as a terrorist organisation, many Salafists left the organisation. Whilst some left out of fear they might face legal consequences, others left the movement simply because they were shocked by the government's allegations that members of AST were linked to the assassinations. Those who stayed in AST are its most radical members who are now working underground, which will make it ultimately more difficult for the government to control them.

Ennahda's youth branch especially opposed the classification of AST as a terrorist organisation. Many young members are ideologically close to the dogmatic wing and to the Salafists. Already in March 2012, when Ennahda decided to drop the idea of including a reference to sharia in the Constitution, up to 20% of young Ennahda members left the party, according to internal sources. More resignations were reported, including that of senior party members, following the classification of AST as a terrorist organisation and the government crisis. At the end of November 2013, most members of Ennahda's regional office in Gafsa stepped down, citing disagreements with the party leadership.

Many Tunisians also accuse some members of the ruling party of having entertained close relations with the Salafists, including some jihadists now linked to the assassinations.

While some members of the political opposition suggest that Ennahda will split, it is more likely to accelerate its decision to separate the movement from its political wing. This would appease many of its militants who blame the ruling Islamists for pragmatism and believe that religion has suffered from its association with politics. A first indicator of this separation is Ennahda's leader Rachid Ghannouchi's move to establish a "Committee 21", headed by Zied Ladhari and other pragmatists, which will likely become a major force within Ennahda's political wing.

Unlike in Egypt, Ennahda will remain a major force in Tunisian politics despite being challenged now by the opposition umbrella group, Nidaa Tounes. Led by Béji Caid Essebsi, Nidaa Tounes has a support base of around 30%, according to late 2013 polls—a number that is slightly higher than that of Ennahda. However, it is unlikely that Nidaa Tounes will do better than Ennahda in solving the country's mounting political, economic and security problems. This is mainly due to its ideological fragmentation. Indeed, Nidaa Tounes brings together former members of Ben Ali's Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) party, Distourians, leftists, labour union militants and independents. The presence of these various ideological currents has been so divisive that it had prevented Nidaa Tounes from holding its founding congress—by late 2013. Party members cannot agree on whether to elect or to appoint its leaders as leftists, independents and Distourians fear that the RCD will take over the party.

Short- and long-term consequences for Tunisia and the region

In a similar vein, internal division has prevented Nidaa Tounes from establishing a youth branch. The idea that the youth could be entrusted with creating and appointing members went unnoticed. It is unlikely that Nidaa Tounes will be more responsive to addressing the root causes of youth radicalisation. Instead, we can expect Nidaa Tounes to follow Ennahda's example and respond primarily through force to growing jihadist threats.

The current political stalemate and the technocratic government, expected to take over power upon the completion of the National Dialogue, are only delaying the wide-ranging socio-economic and security reforms needed to counter radicalisation and to prevent jihadists from crossing the border into Algeria and Libya. Indeed, the

authorities have not developed any strategy to deal with the 2,000 Tunisians who are currently fighting in Syria and who will eventually come home. As the technocratic government will be primarily charged with organising the next elections, little progress towards a more secure Tunisia can be expected in the medium term.

This bleak outlook, however, should not lead to an overestimation of the jihadist threat in Tunisia. Far from becoming a dominant actor in the country, Salafist jihadists enjoy much less popular support in Tunisia than in neighbouring Libya, for example. Even most of the Tunisians who support jihad in Syria are against such a struggle on Tunisian soil. Moreover, Tunisia's physical infrastructure is not as suited for massive jihadist operations as is the vast Sahel zone in neighbouring countries or Algeria's mountains. Moreover, most of the comparatively small 70 square kilometres of the Chaambi mountains has been bombed or is monitored by security forces. The border with Libya has also become more secure through the establishment of a buffer zone in August 2013. That being said, only a more differentiated domestic security strategy and closer regional security cooperation can mitigate the jihadist threat.

A Descriptive Analysis of Northern Mali's Ethnic Groups and Classes and Their Interaction

Ethnicity and class have a far-reaching influence over social relations, politics and conflict among residents of northern Mali. By northern Mali, I refer to the three northern-most administrative zones of the Republic of Mali: Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. Home to about 1.3 million people—roughly 9% of Mali's total population—these zones have been the scene of most of the violence that has engulfed this country since late 2011. They constituted nearly all the Malian territory occupied by rebel groups from April 2012 through January 2013. Finally, they share frontiers with some of Mali's neighbours: Timbuktu borders on Mauritania and Algeria; Gao borders on Burkina Faso and Niger; and Kidal borders on Algeria and Niger. Inhabitants of this area find themselves at the centre of a turbulent sub-region.

Ethnic classification is an intrinsically unscientific process relying on subjective criteria. Ethnic affiliation is often ambiguous and can change over an individual's lifetime; someone may identify differently depending on the criteria used (paternal descent, maternal descent, maternal language or primary language spoken). Inter-ethnic marriage is commonplace throughout the Sahel, and many Sahelians grow up in multilingual environments. When asked about their ethnicity, Malians often answer based on their father's ethnic affiliations, since one's patronym usually determines one's ethnicity in Mali. Yet many Malians born to mixed couples may personally identify more with their maternal language and heritage.

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Ethnicity is a poor predictor of political behaviour in most of Mali, especially where voting is concerned. While Malian law prohibits the formation of political parties based on ethnic membership, strong *cousinage* relations cut across most identity categories, preventing the formation of political alliances along ethnic lines.[2]

The Malian government collects no data on ethnicity in its official surveys. My discussion of ethnic group distribution in northern Mali therefore uses spoken language as a proxy for ethnicity, employing figures from Mali's 2009 census.[3]

The four largest ethnic groups in northern Mali are Songhai, Touareg, Arab and Fulbe, also known as Fulani or Peul. Each of these groups is present in neighbouring countries; notably, the Songhay, Touareg, and Fulbe constitute the second, third and fourth largest groups respectively in Niger. All four are also divisible into subgroups speaking different dialects.

The Songhai (47.3% of northern Mali's population) are a black African population whose language belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family. During the 15th and 16th centuries, they dominated the Songhai Empire that ruled over most of what is today northern Mali. Mali's Songhai residents are concentrated in rural and urban communities in the area known as the Niger Bend, cutting across the southern portion of Timbuktu and Gao. The Songhai constitute roughly half the population of these two zones (compared to just 3% in Kidal). Their livelihoods historically have revolved around farming, livestock, commerce and labour migration. Since the mid-1900s, Songhai migrants have gone to Ghana as seasonal labour. Small numbers of returned migrants established reformist Muslim communities from the 1970s onward, often in rural areas since their followers regarded towns as sources of corruption.[4] More recently, some members of these communities have supported armed Salafist groups such as the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Songhai speakers also make up 21% of the population of Niger, where they are known as Djerma or Zarma.

The Touareg people speak a Berber language called Tamasheq and are also known as Kel Tamasheq (speakers of Tamasheq). They comprise 30% of northern Mali's population, roughly one-quarter of the populations of Timbuktu and Gao, but 85% of the population of Kidal. Although the Touareg are usually described as desert-dwelling nomads, significant numbers of Touareg have become sedentarised since the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. Pastoralism remains a vital part of their livelihood, however, along with trade. From the 1970s until 2011, thousands of Touareg men migrated to Libya to work and serve in Moammar Gadhafi's military.[5]

While Westerners often label Touaregs "white", Touareg society recognises the complex racial classification of its constituents, based on both social class and descent (lineage). The racial categories internal to Touareg (and Arab) society are complex and cannot be easily translated into a "black" and "white" opposition familiar in the West. Nevertheless, Touareg society is widely seen as divided among a white nobility and a black population of slave origins. These racial categories haunt politics in Mali regarding the north (and in the north itself), as they do in neighbouring countries. Speakers of Tamasheq include low-status groups known as Bellah or Iklan, whose members are typically dark-complexioned, as well as noble lineages whose members tend to be lighter-skinned. Touareg people also inhabit Niger, southern Algeria, southwestern Libya and northern Burkina Faso.

Northern Mali's Arabs, which speak the Hassaniya dialect of Arabic, constitute just 7% of this area's inhabitants. Malian Arabs come from several subgroups. On the western side are Berabiche and Kunta, spread from Timbuktu to Kidal. They have strong ties to kin in neighbouring Mauritania. US diplomats have expressed concern over Berabiche links to AQIM.[6] To the east, Arab Tangara and Tilemsi (also known as Lemhar) communities cultivate business and marriage relations with other Arabs residents across the border with Algeria. All these groups are associated primarily with trans-Saharan trade, and often with cross-border smuggling.[7] Like the Touareg, Mali's Arabs embody a diverse array of African and Mediterranean physical traits.

The Fulbe likewise make up 7% of northern Mali, but are concentrated in Timbuktu (where they compose 11.5% of the population), especially along the Niger Bend. There are significant groups of Fulani nomads straddling the border between Mali and Niger in the East, in the Tamesna plain. These communities live in a semi-permanent state of conflict with their Touareg neighbours. Their language, which belongs to the Niger-Congo family, is Mali's third most widely spoken language. Of the four ethnic groups discussed here, the Fulbe are the only people with a large presence in the rest of Mali, not to mention throughout the sub-region. The Fulbe are renowned as nomadic pastoralists, yet many are sedentarised and involved in commerce or agriculture.

Each ethnic population discussed above is divided according to lineage and ascribed status. Most Malian ethnic groups, northern or

southern, have hierarchical structures with noble clans dominating clans of vassal or slave status. Members of high-status groups have historically enjoyed certain privileges over members of low-status groups, but today these distinctions are the source of bitter contestation. High-status Touareg clans, most notably the Kidal-based Ifoghas and Idnan, have led repeated rebellions against the Malian government since independence in 1960. The Touareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the Islamist Ansar Dine are dominated by Idnan and Ifoghas respectively. The Malian government attempted to exploit rivalries by raising militias, recruited from historically low-status Tormoz (a low-status Berabiche subclan) Arabs and Imghad Touareg, to contain the rebel threat. Inter-ethnic alliances have frequently formed among high-status clans, with the Ifoghas Touareg allying with the Kunta Arabs against the low-status Imghad, Tilemsi and Tormoz.

Moreover, racial distinctions, both within and between northern Mali's ethnic groups, are well established. Racialised categories correspond to patron-client relations among these groups, but they are shaped more (or partly invented) by genealogies of Arab ancestry than by physical traits.[8] Anti-black racism, a history of slave raiding and most recently a recurring pattern of Touareg rebellion has led many non-Touareg Malians—particularly those of the majority black population—to regard the Touareg with suspicion and fear, and to develop an anti-white racism in response, a sentiment that has been instrumentalised by successive regimes in Bamako. Ethnic militias formed in the Niger Bend, with the predominantly Songhai Ganda Koy established in the 1990s and the predominantly Fulbe Ganda Izo created in 2008.

In contemporary Malian political discourse, ethnicity is rarely evoked in explicit terms. This taboo is a product of the Malian state's nation-building project aimed at minimising ethnic divisions and stressing the solidarity of the Malian people. Nonetheless, Malians loyal to the central government frequently use coded language to refer to their Touareg rivals. The Bamako press hardly ever labels the MNLA as a separatist or even a rebel organisation; rather, headlines simply call the MNLA "armed bandits". The insurgency is thus stripped of any legitimate grievances and equated with criminality, while rebellious Touareg are branded "the spoiled children of the republic". A Malian anthropologist recently described the Touareg as inherently untrustworthy, inveterate racists bent on preserving their feudal

society through domination and pillage.[9] Such language has long been used to mobilise members of sedentary/black communities against a perceived nomad/Touareg threat.[10]

An inverted discourse prevails among Touareg nationalists portraying the Malian government as a genocidal regime bent on the eradication of the Touareg people. They believe that room exists in the post-colonial Malian state only for black Africans, and that as "whites" they will endure discrimination as long as they are subject to Malian rule. Competing claims of racial oppression have grown louder in northern Mali since the latest Touareg rebellion formed in late 2011. Such claims gain purchase by ignoring the long history of coexistence, cooperation and intermarriage that has marked relations among these groups.

The Emergence of Armed Groups in the Sahara-Sahel

The emergence of armed jihadist groups in the Sahel stems from the Algerian civil war. The interruption of legislative elections by the military high command, when President Chadli Bendjedid stepped down on 11 January 1992, sparked an armed insurrection by the supporters of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its more radical wings. Initially overwhelmed, the security forces were reorganised and developed their counter-insurrection tools and techniques. The armed groups fell back outside of urban centres, in particular from working-class neighbourhoods. In parallel, the Algerian armed groups split apart because of internal rivalries and divisions, exacerbated by the ceasefire agreements the authorities made with the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in 1997. Gradually, the Algerian armed groups were forced to withdraw their logistical bases, in particular their arms caches, into the south of Algeria.

The armed groups also took advantage of long-established smuggling networks in the Sahara-Sahel region. The arrest in the early 1990s of Hadj Bettou, an Algerian smuggler active in arms trafficking, enabled smugglers and armed groups to join together. The armed groups had already been reported as early as 1998 in Niger, although it was not until the beginning of the 21st century that this presence became known. In fact, the hostage-taking of European tourists in 2003 was the first jihadist action that took place in the Sahara-Sahel. When the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) announced in 2006 that it had joined the Al-Qaeda movement (which the Al-Qaeda core acknowledged in 2007), Algerian jihadism had formally become transnational under the name of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), even as the jihad was losing momentum in Algeria and the beginning of the "Global War on Terror" justified ideologically the internationalisation of the Algerian jihad. Thus, for the GSPC, operating in the Sahara-Sahel area was as much a necessity as an opportunity.

Armed groups in the Sahara-Sahel space

Armed groups have used multiple methods for sustaining themselves in the Sahara-Sahel space: recruiting, promotion and support. In addition to a diminished theological/ideological command, there are not only relatively loyal fighters, but also criminal cells and individuals who act as "sub-contractors". According to the French armed forces,

one third of fighters were reportedly killed in the 2013 campaign, and another third reportedly laid down their weapons, leaving several hundred more continuing to fight.

AQIM

Of Algerian origin, AQIM developed its structure in the Sahara-Sahel around several *katibat* (battalions) and *seriat* (brigades) that are constantly redefining themselves. Katiba el-Ansar is led by Abdelkrim el-Targui, a Malian Touareg from the Ifoghas region and with family relationship with Iyad Ag Ghali, head of Ansar Dine. This relationship has allowed Ansar Dine to take advantage of the men and means of part of the katiba when control of cities in northern Mali was taken away from the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), in the spring of 2012. The fact that a military leader of AQIM knows the terrain and the local and transnational tribal networks gives the organisation greater ability to circulate and better direction of the Sahel troops.

However, it was probably taking advantage of the region's sociological and economic conditions that allowed the organisation to establish itself so deeply and solidly. Abandoned by the central authorities, northern Mali has remained isolated and under-developed while becoming a space of informal trading, including in primary resources and manufactured goods as well as narcotics. The presence of armed groups can therefore be sustained by exchanges with local merchants and agro-pastoralists, or through support for micro-development projects, such as building a well. This occasional support goes hand in hand with investments (eg, into hotels or Koranic schools) from actors from the Middle East and the Gulf which accompany the spread of the Salafist jihadist ideology.

Another way to improve relations with the local populations was to recruit and promote individuals from the Sahel in the organisation. Dominated in its leadership by Algerian nationals under the loose command of Abdelmalek Droukdel, AQIM nevertheless recruited young people from Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, as well as Sahrawi young people seduced by Salafist ideology and/or the pay, which can be up to ten times the average salary in the region. In November 2012, the terrorist organisation changed its hierarchy and promoted individuals from the Sahel: two Mauritanians successively commanded the Al-Forkane (or Al-Vourghan) brigade; another

brigade, Youssef Ibn Tachfine, was created under the leadership of a Malian from Kidal, El-Kairouani Abou Abdelhamid Al-Kidali, who leads many Touaregs.

Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)

The strategic importance of these appointments stems from internal dissension within AQIM. The origins of MUJAO can be interpreted in various complementary ways: 1) the disdain which the Algerian leadership reportedly had for recruits from the Sahel; 2) a disagreement over the taking of European hostages in the Sahrawi camps of Tindouf, which triggered the split; 3) disagreement regarding the division of the organisation's income. Furthermore, MUJAO has ties with merchants in Gao who may be involved in the smuggling and trafficking in the region.

MUJAO is therefore above all the Sahel branch of AQIM which became autonomous in the fall of 2011. Its ideological and military leadership, like its troops, are exclusively from countries in the region, in particular Mauritania (widely known for its religious education), Mali and Niger. The group's make-up deepens relations with the local populations and provides opportunities for strategic mergers with regional jihadist groups, such as with Boko Haram. The foregoing is in addition to its declared aim of spreading jihadism throughout West Africa and the Sahara-Sahel region.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar

A former leader of Algerian armed groups present in the region since the late 1990s, Belmokhtar used his role in regional smuggling, in particular of cigarettes, to embed himself into the local population. He married three women from Touareg and Berabiche tribes of northern Mali. One of his close associates, the "red-bearded" Arab Berabiche, his former lieutenant within AQIM, Oumar Ould Hamaha, first participated in the capture of Timbuktu with Ansar Dine before becoming a military leader within MUJAO.

Too autonomous from the Algerian leadership of the group and hoping to embody jihadism in the area, Belmokhtar was rejected from his katiba, El-Moulathamoune, before founding his own group, which ended up merging with MUJAO under the name of Al-Mourabitoune. Most of his men, including many individuals from the Sahel, followed

him. This merger seems to confirm the hypothesis that Belmokhtar reportedly gave his blessing to the creation of MUJAO. Belmokhtar's smuggling and trafficking activities made his integration into local solidarities indispensible, and these in return provided him with manpower and occasional services.

Prospects following the military interventions

An initial factor in forcing the jihadists out of the region is the resolution of crises associated with the ethnic and cultural minorities in the Sahel, followed by the implementation of genuine and effective development policies. The redistribution of profits from natural resource extraction among the local populations and the improvement of governance and justice systems are two examples of the political and socio-economic issues that could make it unattractive for local people to participate in conflicts.

The second factor that could prolong the conflict situation is based on the distribution of weapons from the Libyan arsenals which are feeding the smuggling networks and the armed groups: these weapons are both sources of income and tools in the fighting which are easily available. Furthermore, the geographical dispersion of armed groups, particularly their establishment in southern and eastern Libya, also expands their transnational operating spaces in terms of action, training and recruiting.

The external support that the armed groups may receive is the last aspect that could support their establishment in the region. Moreover, while the military operations in Libya and Mali disorganised the groups initially, the possibility of a strategic (not tactical) rapprochement with Nigerian or Somali jihadist groups, or with the groups known as Ansar Al-Sharia, could be justified ideologically and operationally in that, with less room to manoeuvre, the groups could attain economies of scale in political and military terms. Finally, the French defence ministry recently confirmed a report implicating Qatar and Saudi Arabia in providing funding and logistical support to the armed groups; the loss of ransoms, further to the related G8 decision, and the reduction in trafficking income must not be compensated by other external sources of funding.

Current Situation and Future of Jihadism in Mauritania

Jihadism is not part of the immediate current situation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. However it plays a key role in its very recent past. The last attack on Mauritanian territory dates back to 2011. A hostage of the Mauritanian army had been freed in December of that year at the end of an exchange of prisoners with the Mauritanian government. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) then remained in Mali and Algeria, but "neglected" Mauritania. Aside from the fact that it is probably temporary, this respite occurred following counter-terrorist measures taken precisely in response to a long period (2005-2011) during which the country was clearly a special target of the Sahara-Sahel terrorists. Undoubtedly more so than for other neighbouring countries, the spectre of jihadism will hang over Mauritania as long as the phenomenon exists, but also as long as Mauritania itself has not managed to stabilise the internal political situation sustainably. Also, none of these processes is certain in the short term, as long as the terrorists know how to take advantage of the social and political crisis of the states in order to grow, recruit and redeploy on a long-term basis both across the territory and exploiting the marginalised social classes of the region.

The country still has borders which are difficult to control given the potential for significant political instability (...)

The way that AQIM and its branches have used a part of the Touareg irredentist movement to divide Mali illustrates this amply. But this logic is even more evident in the countries which have experienced recent political changes such as Tunisia and Libya. Located in this true northwest African storm centre, Mauritania is also vulnerable for specific reasons. The country still has borders which are difficult to control given the potential for significant political instability, the characteristics of which are as follows: a tradition of military putsches, a compromised democratisation process, ethnic tensions, growing inequalities, widespread corruption, increasing poverty, as well as a demographic transition whose consequences are unknown.

Despite the "successes" of the war on terrorism, much remains unknown and the potential for radicalisation is real. For example, the limited presence of Mauritanians in terrorist networks is an old phenomenon (more than 20 years), but today there are probably hundreds of Mauritanians who are still active in Sahelian and Maghreb networks of Salafist jihadism. Within the country, however, a number of networks, cells and sympathisers are under surveillance or have been dismantled since 2008. But nobody knows the number of the new jihadist recruits, the environment from which they could come from, nor the individuals who could be potentially mobilised to participate in a new cycle of radicalisation. We also continue to note the advance of the Salafist culture (theoretically non jihadist) in urban and rural centres, on the one hand and the meteoric rise of the Tawassoul party (local Muslim Brotherhood) in the last general elections in 2013, on the other hand.

Under these conditions, Mauritania will not escape the direct or indirect effects of regional and national jihadist radicalisation. Only the nature, forms, methods and potential scope under which these effects will take shape remain to be determined. The possibilities in this area remain unknown for Mauritania as for all the other countries in West and North Africa. To understand this concretely, the jihadist experience recently undergone in the country in the shadow of an Islamic rebirth, including on the political front, should be recalled.

A favourable context?

In theory, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania was initially built on an ethno-confessional foundation. In fact, since independence, the religious landscape has transformed in ways that nobody had envisioned at the moment of the creation of the small nation which had taken the label "Islamic" above all to overcome the glaring ethnic divisions within its population. For example, in 1960, Nouakchott, the capital of the country, had no mosque, and the entire country had less than a hundred mosques. Five decades later, a government survey reveals that there are now 7,643 constructed places of worship. The investigation points out that 53% of those were built without the state's authorisation. As for traditional religious educational institutions, there are now reportedly 6,489, most of which (that is, 5,702) are allegedly simple "Koranic schools". At the time of independence, there were only 777.

These statistics, which do not take into account the explosion in the Islamic charity sector, the growth of new forms of individual religiousness, or the democratisation of the religious leadership, demonstrate that the global Islamic rebirth combined with the gradual end to the management of piety below the governmental level at the village and tribal level has radically changed the socio-religious landscape of the country. It is in this context that an Islamist political movement that mirrors the ups and downs of the turbulent political development of the country has taken shape. Jihadism survived in the country because of actors and developments abroad, but it found growing local support and an echo around the 2000s.

Jihadism

The country had achieved a kind of troubling notoriety because of the presence of a few of its citizens in regional and international jihadist networks. The government had easily identified as of 1994 local links to international jihadism. Mauritanians were then found in such networks and among the followers of Bin Laden. Unthinkable for a long time, the violent action of radical Mauritanian militants became commonplace because of the advancement of proselytism, the result of the sustained socialisation of numerous individuals in preaching networks. Later, the proliferation and variety of AQIM operations against the country between 2005 and 2011 pushed Mauritania into the era of violent attacks and, consequently, the war on terrorism.

Since 1994 government repression of the manifestations of political Islam hardly prevented the country (it was instead the reverse) from being propelled into the era of jihadism when the attack against the army in June 2005 occurred. The following years would see the country pushed into a cycle of suicide attacks, hostage-takings and executions of foreign nationals in the country, assassinations of members of the army, and raids against garrisons, among other things. The authorities then seriously considered implementing a counter-terrorism policy.

"Deradicalisation"?

As of 2009, terrorism was fought with military preventive actions, raids in northern Mali and effective police work. In this context, most of those guilty of bloody crimes committed in the national territory were arrested. The government then had to initiate a reform of the army,

enhance the increased surveillance of borders, commit to international cooperation and conduct legal and judicial reforms. The authorities felt compelled to organise a "religious response" in the context of a deradicalisation policy rolled out by the state.

Fifty-five "repentant Salafist prisoners" who went through the deradicalisation program were granted amnesty and benefited from an economic reintegration program in August 2011. While most of deradicalisation candidates charged with crimes had received more or less light sentences, the terrorists found guilty of bloody crimes were sentenced to severe penalties and are still kept in a secret prison today. The government still wants to reform the religious space. For example, it maintains increased surveillance of mosque activity and religious institutions. It should be specified that the radicalisation of small groups of youth increased between 1994 and 2005 following the repression of vague attempts to create a political Islam movement. The first attacks of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) against Mauritania in 2005 had been justified by the willingness to defend the indiscriminate "harassment" of religious circles. Two months later, the regime in power in Nouakchott was overthrown by its own army. An unexpected situation, this turn of events would coincide with the relative political success of "Islamists" who would henceforth be moderate and anxious to distance themselves from any form of radicalism.

Tawassoul

At first secretive until the early 2000s, the Mauritanian Islamist movement made a progressive breakthrough in the last years of the regime of President Ould Taya (1984-2005), who saw it as the greatest threat to his regime. The opposition to the dictator, who reigned for a long time in Mauritania, sees the Islamists as an additional in its fight. This is what helps the latter to position themselves post-Taya, following a *coup d'état* in 2005. Since, the Tawassoul party has been recognised and has carved out an important place in terms of elected positions, social networks and public debate. Very interested in eventually participating in the exercise of power, the "moderate reformers" are seeking both to place themselves at the centre of the political game, but also to avoid the negative effects of a possible return to authoritarianism. Tawassoul is doing everything to obtain power, but without success. However, given its success in the 2013 elections, it will henceforth become

an inescapable element in the future political reconfigurations of the country, as well as on the socio-political scene in Mauritania. It is difficult to determine the related impact on radicalism or the moderation of Islamist forces opposed to the modern state and multi-party democracy. Recently, the "moderate Islamists" of Tawassoul converted to multi-party democracy and accepted the final results of the elections, while recognising the primacy of the rule of law. Faced with the subsequent competition of extremists who describe themselves as Salafists, they have reinstated at the centre of their rhetoric praise for moderation and religious condemnation of violence. Will this process, along with cooperation with other social and state actors, contribute to the retreat of jihadism in Mauritania?

Nigeria: Counter-terrorism at Home and the Significance of the 2015 Presidential Elections

Highlights about the current state of political and religio-ethnic violence in Nigeria:

- Concentrated in the northeast and in the Middle Belt, but is found to a greater or lesser extent all over the country;
- Ethnic and religious violence comes as much from Boko Haram as from the security services;
- Boko Haram violence has not decreased as it has withdrawn from urban to rural areas; and
- Security services have killed about as many Nigerians as Boko Haram has.

The Abuja government faces a broader domestic political crisis than just the depredations of Boko Haram, although the latter are an important contribution to it. The government's inability to bring jihadist violence under control undermines its credibility and contributes to the widespread dissatisfaction with President Goodluck Jonathan.

Even beyond the jihadist insurrection, much of the political class has lost confidence in the way the country is governed, including its institutional structure. Levels of official corruption are believed to be the highest they have ever been. Many elites outside the north do not object to the human rights violations associated with the security services; they object to the fact that Jonathan has been unable to crush the insurrection. It is this failure, not his seeming tolerance for human rights abuses that undercuts him in the rest of the country outside the north. So, too, does his inability to rein in corruption, if he is not a direct beneficiary of it (as many Nigerians believe).

The presidential elections of 2015 have the potential to destabilise the country and challenge Nigeria's unity. There appears to be little consensus as to when the elections will be held or what the rules will be that govern them—no matter what is current law, regulation or practice. Many Nigerians are sceptical that polling will take place at all.

Even beyond the disruption caused by the jihadist insurrection in the north, the capacity of the Abuja government to conduct credible elections is unclear. The 2013 state elections in Anambra—untouched by jihadist insurrection—were widely seen as a dress rehearsal for

2015. They were a logistical nightmare with credible charges of rigging, recalling the worst of the elections of 2007. If this foretells what 2015 will be like, the results are unlikely to be acceptable to many Nigerians—especially the losers.

There are various scenarios that could prevent elections in 2015. One is driven by Abuja's counter-terrorism strategy. Were President Jonathan to extend to additional areas the state of emergency currently in place in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa to counter an unbowed Boko Haram, this could justify (at least in the eyes of his supporters) postponement of the elections.

As in the run-up to 2011, many who are looking for a resolution to Nigeria's political crisis are pinning their hopes on the emergence of a credible opposition. Former Lagos state governor Bola Tinubu and 2011 opposition presidential candidate Mohammadu Buhari have merged their respective political organisations into a new party called the All Progressive Congress. They have been joined in opposition by dissidents from the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), who style themselves the "New PDP". This combined entity looks impressive, with a majority of the governors and a majority in the Senate. If this coalition sticks, it could break the mould of dysfunctional Nigerian politics. A non-PDP majority in the Senate also raises the possibility of an impeachment of Jonathan before elections. The trouble will be in choosing a presidential candidate from among so many personalities, many of whom (Tinubu and Buhari especially) have personal presidential king-maker aspirations.

Jonathan has yet to announce whether he is going to run in 2015. However, he has dropped plenty of hints that he will do so. Jonathan is the standard bearer for the Delta electorate, which has never before occupied the presidency, and the region likely will insist that Jonathan run and be re-elected. If elections do take place, and in the unlikely event that they follow the rules and procedures of 2011, both of which are big "ifs", Jonathan likely would be rigged-in. Faced with a unified opposition candidate or, if there is no agreement, a northern Muslim opposition candidate and probably other presidential aspirants fragmenting the opposition vote, the ruling PDP, well-greased with money, could assure Jonathan's victory in all of the predominantly non-Muslim states.

Another hurdle to be overcome for a first-round victory is that a candidate must win at least 25% of the votes in two-thirds of the 36 states. In 2011, Jonathan carried with an outright majority 22 of the 24 Christian and "mixed' states. In the other two states, he exceeded the 25% threshold. In the majority of the northern states, which he lost to Buhari, Jonathan nonetheless exceeded the required 25% threshold. Eight of those 12 states had PDP governors and were well-positioned to ensure that the PDP candidate reached the required threshold.

In 2011, outside observation was weak or non-existent at the collation centres, and significantly stronger at the polling stations. Consequently, according to some Nigerian human rights observers, the rigging took place at the collation centres, not at the polling stations. Assuming that Jonathan maintains his PDP base in the primaries and draws at least some of the dissident governors back into the PDP fold, that pattern of collation-centre rigging would likely ensure his election in 2015.

However, the elite consensus within the PDP that has been a feature of Nigerian rigging has broken down, as indicated by the emergence of an opposition bloc. That would raise the spectre that election rigging and bribing could be insufficient for Jonathan to meet the constitutional requirements and would force him into a run-off. Such a scenario, implying elite disarray, could be violent.

The jihadist insurrection labelled Boko Haram is bitterly hostile to the Nigerian state and to the democratic process. In the event of elections, it must be anticipated that Boko Haram members and affiliates will use terrorism to disrupt the electoral process. In the event of a Jonathan victory, perceptions of northern disenfranchisement would almost certainly increase. Under that scenario, Boko Haram would likely prove a rallying point among those who see the north as marginalised within the federation ruled by the "southern" and "Christian" government in Abuja. This would likely manifest itself in greater active and passive support for Boko Haram, as well as a plethora of independent vigilantes who would take to the streets in pursuit of variable agendas.

Boko Haram is likely to be as hostile to an opposition party as it is to Jonathan's government and, among other things, it reflects popular anger at those who run Nigeria—no matter what their political affiliation. Jonathan and his political opposition are, by Boko Haram's

standards, both secular, and neither would support the imposition of a strict sharia regime. Both are creatures of the Nigerian establishment that is self-centred and largely alienated from the country's grassroots, especially in the north. But the victory of a presidential candidate from the opposition would likely be welcomed by many in the north who, up until now, have been willing directly or tacitly to support radical jihadism because of their disaffection with the Jonathan administration. As such, an opposition victory would likely undermine not so much Boko Haram's grassroots support base but rather the fellow travellers and those in the northern elites of shadowed identity who acquiesce—if not support—its campaign against the Abuja government

In the unlikely event that the PDP denies Jonathan the presidential nomination, that he is impeached, that for some reasons he decided not to run, or that he should be defeated by another candidate for the presidency, the Delta could erupt into violence. The last insurrection in the Delta was resolved by an amnesty program that involved pay-offs to militia leaders. Many of them are now part of Jonathan's inner circle and enjoy highly lucrative contracts, ostensibly to guarantee the security of oil infrastructure. Several of them have threatened to set the Delta on fire if Jonathan does not continue in the presidency.

(...) Jonathan's re-election, especially in elections likely to be seriously flawed, would confirm northern perceptions of their own alienation and would likely boost the jihadist insurrection.

Looking towards the end of Jonathan's presidential term in 2015, Nigeria is between a jihadist rock and a Delta hard place. Jonathan's support among the traditional elites has been eroded by his incompetence and his inability to deal with the jihadist insurrection in the north. The security services have driven the jihadists out of Maiduguri, but they cannot control the countryside, and their brutality probably drives some support for Boko Haram. If Jonathan withdraws or is defeated, it would probably erode—though not eliminate—Boko Haram. But should Jonathan be excluded from running again for the presidency, or defeated at the polls, there could be a rapid resurgence of the insurrection in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Militants, excluded from the presidential inner circle

of a post-Jonathan administration, might shut down Nigeria's already falling oil production—potentially resulting in a catastrophic decline in government revenue. Jonathan's re-election, especially in elections likely to be seriously flawed, would confirm northern perceptions of their own alienation and would likely boost the jihadist insurrection.

With the difficult choices that Nigeria faces, finding a constitutional or semi-constitutional way to postpone elections may become increasingly attractive to the Nigerian elites. If so, the Western emphasis on elections occurring on schedule and being "free, fair and credible" may be counter-productive. Similarly, Western preoccupation with Boko Haram and its potential links to Al-Qaeda and international terrorism can obscure the reality that it is only one element among others in the current Nigerian political crisis.

Assessing Libya's Political Stability: Risks and Prospects

1. Political and security forces in Libya are highly fragmented. Though generalisation is difficult, the actors may be defined as various discrete networks with shared values, identity and history. Libyans define these networks as being communal, religious or political in nature—the "Islamists", the "Misratans", the "federalists" and so forth. But on closer examination these networks disagree on much, though unite over essential issues. They tend not to like adopting formal party political, religious or military structures. Their leaders tend not to self-identify. Instead, networks usually nominate characters who represent their interests in security or political institutions, but from whom they can maintain distance. It is generally easier to understand Libyan influence networks through their personalities and backgrounds, rather than ideology or structure.

2. There is no formal constitutional authority or political settlement in the country. Gadhafi's fall removed the government's primary decision-maker, leaving its institutions without clear authority or responsibilities. The legitimacy of the interim government is bestowed by the 3 August 2011 Constitutional Declaration, created by the National Transitional Council (NTC), which mandated a directly elected General National Congress (GNC) to appoint a committee to draft a constitution.[11] There is therefore no constitutionally authorised "head of state"; the Prime Minister and President of the GNC share power, and political networks can oppose each other by exerting pressure on these two offices. Likewise, military authority is shared incoherently among the Chief of Staff; Prime Minister; President of the GNC; Minister of Defence; and Military Governor of the South. All the above have been able to either legislate the creation of armed groups or register and order said groups. This has created an overlapping and divided security sector.

3. As of December 2013, the major strategic issues affecting Libya's stability are:

- Distribution of the proceeds from oil exports (the essential driver of "federalism");
- The political and constitutional basis of the state;
- The future of the armed and security forces;
- "Political isolation", or lustration;

- Border security, particularly the influx of illegal narcotics, pharmaceuticals and human migrants into the country, and the related potential to corrupt security forces.

Each issue sees different coalitions of networks with shared interests form to constrain the Zaidan administration.

4. Given the absence of a political settlement or constitutional authority, these coalitions constrained Ali Zaidan, now removed from power, through the GNC, security sector or violent protest. This paper discusses the latter two as the primary threats to transitional stability.

5. Three groups reject various aspects of the transition by force

The "federalist" groups. In the east, some military officers and armed groups from the "oil crescent" near Zuwaitina, as-Sidr and Ras Lanuf terminals—largely from Marghaba, Majabar and Zway families—have supported shutting these terminals down indefinitely, reducing Libya's oil exports by roughly 50%.[12] This, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will likely put the government into deficit spending within three years, depending on projected oil prices and income. This group has rejected the transitional process—it attempted to stop the 7 July 2012 elections by closing the Tripoli-Benghazi highway at Wadi al-Ahmar near Sirt and wishes to force a redivision of Libya into provinces and a redistribution of wealth. They have also rejected an elder generation of "federalist" politicians led by Ahmad al-Zubayr, Abd al-Jawad al-Bidin and others, who rejected the GNC and advocated returning to the 1951 constitution, but opposed using the oil industry as a weapon.

Ansar al-Sharia. The movement rejects democratic government and the 7 July elections. It campaigns for sharia as the primary source of reference in Libyan politics and law. It is estimated to have a central network of a few hundred, but over the last year has developed social services and functions that broaden its "membership" into several thousands. It has branches in Benghazi, Dirna, Ajdabiya and Sirt, and has also heavily recruited in Tripoli. It is headed by Muhammad Ali az-Zahawi. It reportedly has an eight-man leadership council including Fawzi Barawi, a former army officer; a religious committee headed by Nasir al-Tarshani, as well as a media committee headed by Hashim Nawah. Ahmad al-Arabi is a significant commander

within the group. It is made up of groups previously part of the 17 February Coalition and of the Gathering of Revolutionary Companies, including the Abu Ubaida bin Jarra Battalion (commanded by Ahmad Abu Khattala), the Al-Jabal Battalion, as well as Dirna's An-Nur and Nasr al-Mukhtar battalions. The group has come under pressure in Benghazi from the Special Forces; Ansar fighters have moved into several farms surrounding Benghazi, and fighting has persisted in Sidi Khalifa and Laiti neighbourhoods. Sympathetic politicians in the GNC, including the Benghazi members Muhammad Bu Sidra, Salih Juda and Sulaiman Zubi, feel that the group is at risk of being forced underground and into armed resistance, and therefore should be allowed to operate openly.

The **Supreme Council of Revolutionaries**, a coalition of *thuwwar* ("revolutionaries") borne out of a series of conferences beginning in Misrata on 1-2 April 2012, formally announced on 13 August 2012, but only developed after December 2012 as a General Assembly of 250 *thuwwar* chosen from different cities, and which includes an 11-member "executive committee" and several small committees covering political, legal, intelligence/security, social and administrative affairs. Its Declaration No. 3 calls for the government's dismissal and it has mobilised armed protest against the Zaidan government on several occasions, including in March and May 2012. Its "Revolutionary Operations Room" attempted to arrest the Prime Minister on 10 October 2013 on various charges. This sparked a fundamental split with the Tripoli Supreme Security Committee which in turn led to significant armed clashes in Tripoli in mid-November 2013.

6. Other groups aim to constrain Zaidan through setting up parallel and auxiliary security institutions which, particularly in Tripoli and Benghazi, oppose each other. However, these groupings are severely fragmented, posing further security and stability risks.

The main current defence and security institutions (excluding regular police and intelligence) active in Libya include:

- **Regular army formations** (Under the Chief of Staff, including Special Forces (*Sa'iqa),* Military Police, Infantry units, Navy, Air Force);
- **Supreme Security Committee** (61,686, June 2013 figures, under the Ministry of the Interior);

- **Libya Shield Forces** (approximately 67,000, various branches under Chief of Staff);
- **The Borders, Petroleum and Critical Infrastructure Guards ("Border Guards")** (18,000, variously under Chief of Staff, Min. Defence, Military Governor of the South);
- **Preventive Security Apparatus** (4,000, under Chief of Staff);
- **National Guard** (initially created by the current Deputy Defence Minister, Khalid al-Sharif) (4,000-6,000, Ministry of Defence);
- **Joint Security Force** (2,000, authorised by the General Prosecutor).

The *thuwwar* are prominent in the Libya Shield Forces, Border Guards and Preventive Security Apparatus. It should be noted here that the term *thuwwar* is highly contentious; of the tens of thousands now enrolled in security institutions, a fraction—possibly around 10,000 to 20,000, according to the frankest of their own estimates—fought on the front lines of the revolution from February to October 2011.[13] Among them, leading commanders consistently contend that there is a small network constituting roughly 30-200 officers and senior commanders with political and opinion-shaping influence. The group is relatively static, being based on those with proven track records during the revolution. Substantial political differences within and between the *thuwwar* have hindered their coming together as a consistent unit, and they may be considered a coalition of various security networks, both regional (eg, Zintan, Misrata), religious (Islamist, former Abu Slim prisoners) and ethnic (Toubou, Amazigh).

The **Libya Shield Forces** began as a subgroup of Benghazi's Coalition of Libyan Revolutionary Battalions, an agglomeration of 72 armed groups active over eastern Libya after the revolution. Misrata's Union of Revolutionaries independently organised a rotating monthly system for deploying its units in the transitional period. Simultaneously the Zintani commander Abu Dirbala organised a similar force from among the Nafusa mountains communities. In April 2012, a conference of these revolutionary groups in Benghazi called for these groups to become a Libya Shield Force to carry out military-security tasks and border protection under the Chief of Staff's command. The NTC issued Decision Number 47 in April 2012 doing just that. By the end of 2012, the Libya Shield Forces had grown but, primarily due to political and social divisions amongst the *thuwwar* themselves, had fragmented into 13 different divisions.

Likewise, the **Border Guard and Petroleum Facilities Guard** are fragmented into a high number of battalions and networks of different political outlook and community background.

Unlike the Border Guards or Libya Shield Forces, the **Supreme Security Committee (SSC)**, was an effort by the NTC to establish control over Libya's burgeoning armed groups by registering them under the Ministry of the Interior and paying them salaries. Its Tripoli division was its largest, comprising 300 armed groups and around 16,000 people including former police, *thuwwar*, unemployed youth and allegedly criminal gangs. It soon fragmented into fiefdoms as the major Tripolitanian commanders of mobile armed divisions—Haitham al-Tajuri, Hashim Bishr, Abd ar-Rauf Kara and Abd al-Latif Qudur—routed cars and weaponry specifically to those groups that responded to their orders. Corruption in the Supreme Security Council caused by drug trafficking also heightened the fragmentation. Eastern armed groups, Misratan battalions and Zintani/mountain fighters based in Tripoli also registered under competing SSC branches such as the Combating Crimes Committee. Late 2013 fighting in Tripoli saw the aforementioned Tripolitanian commanders turn against Misratan battalions affiliated with the Combating Crimes Committee and the Libya Shield over the latter's involvement in the Libya Revolutionary Operations Room, its attempt at kidnapping Ali Zaidan, and the killing of protestors in Gharghur on 15 November 2013.

Southern Libya Since the Fall of Moammar Gadhafi

Since the fall of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, southern Libya has undergone profound changes. The region is divided into two separate zones: the Touareg zone, traditionally loyal to Gadhafi, and the Toubou zone, marginalised for decades by the regime in power. In the two regions, we also find a "Fezazna" minority, African descendants of slaves who were imported by the Touareg and who have settled in the desert oases over the past centuries, as well as a few Arab merchants scattered throughout the region. The latter two minorities can be considered as politically "amorphous" insofar as they have no military force to make their voices heard.

The Touareg

In 2011, these natural allies of the former regime fled to northern Mali with very large stocks of weapons, a large percentage of which would end up in the hands of jihadist groups. In fall 2012, anticipating the possibility of a French intervention, they dispersed to the Touareg zone of Libya, where they were totally left to fend for themselves, first near Ghat (October 2012) and then in a wider perimeter ranging from the Salvador Pass to Ghadames, passing through Oubari. In January 2013, security sources in Oubari reported the presence of Mokhtar Belmokhtar's terrorist group in this region, prior to the attack on the gas plant at In Amenas.

There are two main brigades or katiba, within the Touareg zone: the Ténéré katiba of Ahmed Bilal and katiba 315 led by Sheikh Ahmed Ben Omar. Both are based in Oubari, even though the Ténéré katiba has branches in Sebha, in Aweinate and in Ghat.

The Toubous

The Toubous control a territory that extends from Algeria to Egypt. Fighting from the beginning alongside the rebels in Benghazi in 2011, they came up against the profound hatred of the Arabs at the beginning of 2012. Deadly confrontations with large Arab tribes from the south (the Ouled Slimane and the Zwouhayis) would result in several hundred deaths in Sebha and in Koufra.

In July 2012, the Toubous established a secret alliance with the tribe of Moammar Gadhafi, which was being persecuted but was still very rich and which would finance them generously in exchange for their

protection. This alliance enabled the Toubous to reverse the balance of power and to regain control over their territory without having to deal with the presence of the Arab brigades.

There are seven Toubou brigades and each is totally independent. Nevertheless, they obey an advisory council similar in principle to a shura and ensure a degree of security entirely satisfactory throughout the region. The katibas are as follows:

- **Mohamed Al-Tobaoui katiba**, led by Ramadan Mehmed, in Oubari, which is a Toubou outpost in the Touareg zone;
- **Dara Al-Sahara katiba**, of Colonel Barka Wardougou, who is today the military governor of Murzuq and who is without question the highest Toubou military authority, even though the size of this brigade is today relatively modest (about 150 men);
- **Revolutionaries of Mourzouq katiba**, led by Aboubacar Al-Sougui, which is responsible for protecting the oil fields in the south;
- **Aoum Al-Arambe katiba**, led by Colonel Ramadan Al Laki and his deputy, Cherfadine, which is responsible for the border with Niger;
- **17-2 Gatrun katiba**, based in Sebah and headed by Dounaï Ali Zeid, which acts as a Toubou outpost in the Arab zone;
- **Fatehi Allaben katiba**, headed by Abdel Allaben, which manages a large part of the southern border with Egypt (Al-Sara, Aweinate and Malke Mountain zones); and
- **Fight against illegal migration of Issa Abdelmajid Al Mansour katiba**, which is today headed by Issa Wiché (chief of operations).

Trafficking and contraband

Since 2011, smuggling has exploded in southern Libya, whether it involves human beings, drugs or counterfeit goods. In most cases, the inhabitants of Fezzan do not actively take part in the trafficking. They are content to sell "border crossing permits" to groups of traffickers based in Niger.

The Touareg network

The smugglers arrive via the Salvador Pass and then bypass Oubari until Waad El-Shaati. Liaison is then established with the

Zintan brigades in the Ghadames region, which take over in order to transport the merchandise to the Mediterranean Sea. All this happens under the obliging eye of the Ténéré, who rule this region. This route is used above all for drugs smuggling, and African migrants are rarely taken care of by the Touareg.

The Toubou network

Migrants

Most of the illegal migrants enter Libya via Toumou after having been rounded up in the Dirkou region. They are then "unloaded" in Gatrun or in Sebah before travelling alone to the north (for a price ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 dinars) to various brigades that coordinate the crossing.

Drugs

Drug routes generally follow two paths that leave from Agadez to go to the city of Tazerbou, before traffickers linked to the Cyrenaic brigades take charge. These routes are long but discreet (no village for 1,000 km). The "passage fees" depend on the value of the cargo, but the price is generally between 10,000 and 25,000 dinars.

Traffickers in southern Libya

Jihadists enjoyed a quasi-monopoly over contraband until early 2013. They took delivery of the merchandise from the border of sub-Saharan Africa (from Ansaru and Boko Haram) to convey them out of the Libyan desert. Operation Serval led by France disrupted the operations of this network, but did not reduce the traffic. Independent traffickers have simply taken on a greater share of the smuggling, thus improving their financial situation, to the detriment of the jihadists since the start of 2013; these traffickers today control most of the convoys.

Terrorism

Ansar Dine, hostage to its past

Ansar Dine has numerous rear bases in the vicinity of Aweinate and the Djebel Kakous, which are under the protection of the Ténéré brigade. Ahmed Bilal, its leader, is a close associate of Iyad Agh

Ghali and facilitates the operations of this group in Libya. Ansar Dine also has a camp of several dozen fighters west of Adiri, in the Wad El-Shaati, a Gadhafi bastion which maintains very good relations with the Touareg. On the other hand, Ansar Dine's relations with the jihadists of the north are extremely bad: the revolutionaries of the coast consider the numerous Libyan Touareg of this organisation to be "pro-Gadhafi" despite their Islamist affiliation. For this reason, the ideological and military influence of this group is confined to southwest Libya and the Sahel, with no ties to the rest of the country.

The primary intermediary of Al-Qaeda in southwest Libya: Katiba 315

Despite their internal differences, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) have become closer to the competing brigade of Ténéré in Oubari, Katiba 315. Though Katiba 315 is smaller, it has nevertheless very important support in the north within radical Islamist circles. Katiba 315 is led by Sheikh Ahmed Ben Omar, a Malian Salafist who arrived in the Ifoghar region in fall 2012. He was never a member of Gadhafi's regime. Tensions with revolutionaries in the north are thus non-existent.

Katiba 315 at the heart of the terrorist network

Katiba 315 maintains close ties to the two power brokers of Al-Qaeda in Libya, Abdelbassed Azouz and Najid Al-Issaoui, which places them at the heart of the Libyan jihadist chessboard. In September 2013, through these two men, Dera Libya delivered seven ZU23-2 anti-aircraft guns to this brigade, as well as about fifteen 14.5 mm weapons—all of which disappeared in less than a week for an unknown destination. Transfers of this type occur very regularly.

Jihadists from Mali going to Syria pass through Oubari and then Derna, where they are received by various "partner" brigades, such as Ansar Al-Sharia. About 30 of these men, mostly Sudanese and Nigerians, told the author in September 2013 that they had reached Libya with the help of Katiba 315 smugglers. In Oubari, these men were taken care of by Dera Libya, under the cover of a convoy of the "national army". Collusion between Dera Libya and Ansar Al-Sharia clearly emerged following the murder of the United States Ambassador, Christopher Stevens, when a commander of this brigade, who was however tasked with protecting the consulate in

Benghazi, stated that he would refuse to stop his "brothers" of Ansar Al-Sharia, even if he received that order.

Omar Belmokhtar's katiba of Benghazi also occupies a special place in the international jihadist organisational chart, which is still under the supervision of Azouz and of Al-Issaoui. It has gathered weapons for Syria since 2011. In June 2012, it opened another supply route, this one in the direction of Mali. Donations however do not come only from Libya. During the taking of the Syrian city of Raqaa by Jabhat Al-Nusra, the organisation transferred half of the gold found on-site to AQIM. This transfer occurred thanks to the Omar Belmokhtar brigade, which "converted" the cache into stocks of weapons, of which Katiba 315 took possession in Oubari in summer 2012. This equipment (ZU-23, Dushka, RPG29, but also SAM-7 and light weapons) was in part hidden in the Libyan desert. The rest was sent to AQIM fighters in Mali.

In early 2013, during negotiations concerning the protection of the oil fields, the Zintan brigades informed the Toubous that the brigade 315 was receiving a regular influx of equipment and of ammunition from the remaining members of the Libyan Supreme Security Committee, most of whom are Salafist, with the consent of the local council in Misrata. A large portion of these weapons were diverted from their final destination and remained in Libya, under the control of the men of Katiba 315, who wanted to set up camps in the Toubou region, by force if necessary. This information is corroborated by several skirmishes between Toubou units of Cherfadine and the Touareg of Katiba 315, which occurred in July, August and September 2013 east of the Salvador Pass.

Ideological infiltration

A number of madrassas, or Koranic schools, were founded in 2013, notably that of Sheikh Ahmed Ben Omar, in the centre of Oubari. Three others operate today in Aweinate and in Ghat, where a school in particular was directly subsidised by an anonymous donor from Qatar. The latter is apparently a man who, according to certain members of the Hausa community, actively participated in the financing of AQIM in 2012.

Objectives and strategies of the jihadists

Perpetuate their new sanctuary

Very mobile camps exist today throughout the entire Touareg region. They often appear to be camel pens summarily established in the desert or hidden in small mountain villages (Brak region). According to Katiba 206 (Toubou) based in Oubari, there are today more than twenty camps linked to AQIM, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in the southwest, with more than 500 foreign jihadists.

Establish a bridge with the Salafist brigades in the north

This objective concerns more AQIM and MUJAO, which have no connection to the previous regime. The key figure of this initiative is Abdelwahab Al-Ghaidi, the leader of the Memory of the Blood of the Martyrs, a radical Salafist coalition of 60 members of the parliament. Originally from the Murzuq region, this Fezazna individual is the brother of Abu Yayah Al-Libi, the number two man of Al-Qaeda who was killed in 2012 by a US drone in Pakistan. His objective is to unite the Salafist brigades created in the northeast with the Sahel jihadists established in the south in order to marginalise the central power and the "moderates" of Zintan. He finances in large part these movements himself. The Salafist brigades of the north "inflate" artificially the number of their fighters in order to receive the fictitious salaries of the government which they then redistribute to foreign jihadists based in the south. This explains the reticence of numerous brigades to join the ranks of a future national army.

Continue to conduct military operations in the Sahel

Whether it be control of water and gas supply points or aerial surveillance, Operation Serval greatly complicated the operations of jihadists in Mali, forcing them to adopt "blitz" tactics in operations that stretch over hundreds of kilometres. Libya thus becomes an indispensable base for groups deployed to the Sahel, generally for operations lasting a few weeks. The operations in Agadez and in Arlit had been conducted by two units from the Salvador Pass, which had left Katiba 315 in Oubari about ten days before the attacks.

In Mali, stocks of weapons also changed in nature: small loads transported behind a pick-up truck from Libya or the great Algerian

south and stored in secure houses, which were totally undetectable by French patrols. Mali is no longer a sanctuary, but Libya has become one. And since there is no possibility of a military intervention, the *solutions are at best imperfect, or simply non-existent.*

Future points to consider

In the absence of a strong power, no clear solution can be considered to end the impunity enjoyed by Islamist groups and traffickers of Fezzan. To reduce the extent of the problem, several possibilities can be explored:

Zintan

Although these brigades are involved in notorious trafficking networks, they represent the most important military force of the country and can easily block jihadist infiltrations north of Ghadames, which thus threatens Tunisia directly.

Algeria

Algeria constitutes a key element to contain the contagion. Since In Amenas, Algiers has understood this well and is working effectively on a portion of its border for the security of its gas facilities. However, it continues to neglect the east of Hoggar, a particularly mountainous region that is a true route for Islamists between southern Libya and the Ifoghars.

The Toubous

The Toubous tolerate the passage of traffickers, but reject any Salafist presence in their territory. Libya should provide them with further means. But the current parliament and government, both of which are hostages to radical Islamist groups, cannot and do not want to openly engage in the counter-terrorism war with these groups which are nevertheless their best ally.

Mali, Niger and More: Does the Touareg Question Have an Answer?

A few years ago, on a beautifully calm Saharan evening, I was drinking tea with an old Touareg musician in a garden near Tessalit in the far northeast of Mali, a place that has recently been in the news for all the wrong reasons. The musician's work was gaining popularity throughout Europe and North America, so I asked him if he would ever be tempted to leave northern Mali and emigrate to the West.

"The desert is my home," he answered. "I've never been attracted by the idea of emigrating. It's here that I belong. You have to live simply in the desert. It's the only way. And simplicity is freedom."

Disunity has crippled the Touareg cause ever since the French colonial army defeated the mighty Kel Ahaggar at the battle of Tit in 1902. But freedom is the one idea that binds the hearts of every Touareg. Indeed, the aspiration to be free is so central to the Touareg identity, that their own word for a true Touareg of noble mind and heart is *amashagh*, which simply means "free man".

What does this freedom consist of? At its core lie a proud autonomy and self-reliance, to which interference or coercion, especially by a foreign power, is abhorrent. With that goes the freedom to move about the vastness of that ancestral desert without hindrance. Hence the deep wounds created by the new frontiers that sliced through Touareg lands in the early 1960s. Then there is the freedom to manage the desert's unique environment and natural resources according to local needs and customs—the freedom to be a nomad and to be left alone to live quietly in that blessed, or cursed, state of isolation which only a great empty wilderness like the Sahara desert allows.

There are also freedoms that most humans aspire to and which the Touareg share: freedom from taxes that yield no tangible benefit; freedom from corruption and abuse of power; freedom to preserve and promote your own language and culture; freedom to achieve personal advancement and happiness in whatever state you happen to live; freedom to worship according to personal conviction and cultural tradition; freedom to be open and hospitable to outsiders; freedom to seek peace and prosperity.

There is also the desire to live a life free from fear and violence, whether perpetrated by the state, by foreigners or by your neighbours.

Good relations with the other ethnic groups that share the desert space—Arab, Peul, Songhai, Arma, Toubou and others—are essential to the Touareg concept of freedom, because without peace of mind there can be no freedom. Strange as it may seem, until June 1990 and the outbreak of the second great Touareg rebellion, good relations between the Touareg and their neighbours were the norm, not the exception. You have to go back many decades before that conflict to find a case of open war between Touareg and Arab, or Touareg and Songhai in the deserts of northern Mali, or Azawad.

I believe that the simplest way of formulating what is often referred to as the Touareg question is this: to what extent can the Touareg aspiration to freedom find fulfilment in the modern world? Indeed, can it exist at all in the context of the post-colonial, multi-ethnic nation-state? If an answer to that question exists, then it requires some blue-sky thinking, especially now when many of the old formulas that have been applied since independence seem so bankrupt.

Let's start with nationhood. I do not believe that an independent state of Azawad is a possibility, not now and not for decades, even possibly centuries. Neither the social cohesion, the economic foundation nor the global support exist for such a state to succeed. And quite apart from that, Algeria would never let it happen.

Take away the issue of independence, however, and you will find that the aspirations of the average Touareg are basically the same as those of the average non-Touareg citizen of Mali, Algeria or Niger, namely less corruption, better schools and clinics, better transport infrastructure, fairer taxes and duties, more job opportunities and, in the case of other minorities, greater cultural recognition.

In some ways, the independence issue skews the argument in an unhelpful way. The rebellion of 1990 was fought not for independence but for greater investment in the north and advancement for northern Touareg and Arabs in the state of Mali and its institutions; in other words, it was fought in order to belong to Mali in a more meaningful way rather than to become more separate. Before 1990, these aspirations were shared by most northerners, whatever their ethnicity or skin colour. It was only fear and polarisation brought about by conflict that broke down this empathy of aspiration and turned tribe against tribe.

Governments in the region need to concentrate on the aspirations that unite people rather than those that separate them. But alas, creating job opportunities, developing health and education, and promoting minority cultures are often harder for a weak and corrupt government to achieve than maintaining control by turning ethnic groups against each other and keeping populations in a permanent state of fear. But find jobs for the youth, build schools and clinics, and show respect for local culture and the desire for independence will wane.

In Mali, even the most enlightened policies in the north have little chance of success unless there is a concerted effort to reorganise the country's failed governmental structure. Rather than continue to parrot the mantra of "Mali, un et indivisible" and blindly adopt the French Jacobin concept of a rigidly centralised state, why not look at the *länder* of Germany, the parliaments of Wales and Scotland, local government in Catalonia or the federal system in Canada. Mali needs to find a new machinery of tribal, regional and national government, in which appropriate powers of decision-making, especially those relating to taxation, security, education and investment are devolved to structures that work like independent cogs in a larger machine. No easy task, I know, but there are plenty of examples around the world that can serve as stimuli for blue-sky thinking in this regard.

The cultural aspirations of the Touareg, indeed of all desert peoples, need to be fulfilled. The desire to weaken cultural differences and promote a kind of pan-Manding hegemony in Mali, a pan-Hausa hegemony in Niger or a pan-Arab hegemony in Algeria and Libya is both backward and doomed. Reorganise the state TV companies so that TV programmes, especially news and current affairs, in local desert languages like Tamashek, Fulbe, Hassaniya and Songhai are broadcast regularly. Allow local traditions of music and theatre equal access to the state-run airwaves. Use education to promote local language and culture. Make every Malian, Nigerien, Algerian or Libyan feel that whatever language he or she speaks, it will never be a hindrance to their aspirations.

The doors of advancement up the ladder of state institutions, especially the army, must be fully opened to minorities like the Touareg. That might be much to ask in Mali, given the acute levels of suspicion and distrust of Touareg and Arabs that now exist in the south of the country. But such equality of opportunity is essential if Touareg and other desert minorities are to become peaceful citizens within larger, multi-ethnic nations.

What about the frontiers? If we must accept that they are not going to change or disappear, then they must be made less divisive and problematic for desert people. The late Colonel Moammar Gadhafi of Libya might have been a power-hungry despot, but his dreams of creating a borderless Sahara, and issuing nomads with special "nomad" passports were in a sense visionary.

I myself dream of the day when the states of North Africa and the Sahel realise that it would be in their best interests to a create a free economic zone, based loosely on the model of the EU, which spans the entire Sahara from Lake Chad to the Atlantic. Only then will those absurdly arbitrary national borders cease to make a criminal out of an old grandmother who picks up three sacks of couscous in Tamanrasset because they are cheaper there than at home and brings them back to Kidal or Agadez without paying the ridiculously high import duties demanded by the state. As for drug and people smuggling, perhaps the answer to those problems lie in Europe rather than Africa.

The Sahara is a regional space and its problems require regional solutions. In that respect, it is the supranational bodies that include countries from both the Maghreb and the Sahel that are key to future peace and prosperity in the region, bodies such as the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, another Gadhafi invention, or the Joint Operational General Staff Committee (CEMOC). Both are sadly quite toothless at the moment. But in the long term, the importance of bodies such as these to the Touareg and other desert peoples will far outweigh that of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the African Union.

The conflict of 2012-13 has revealed the incompetence and geopolitical naïveté of many Touareg leaders, especially those drawn from poorly educated and self-serving hereditary elites.

Meanwhile, Touareg society needs a revolution of its own. The conflict of 2012-13 has revealed the incompetence and geopolitical naïveté of many Touareg leaders, especially those drawn from poorly educated and self-serving hereditary elites. Touareg society needs to become more mobile, more open to the promotion of genuine talent, more ready to learn about and engage with the rest of the world.

You will have noticed perhaps that I have not mentioned Islamist terrorism or Al-Qaeda once during this orgy of blue-sky thinking. That is because neither are the cause of the Sahara's ills but rather their symptoms. The religious tendencies of just a few ambitious Touareg leaders have managed to tarnish the image of an entire people in the eyes of the world. This is a tragedy which most Touareg I know are not prepared to easily forgive.

A young Touareg drives a pick-up truck for Ansar Dine, or hitches a ride as a cook, a guide or a foot soldier with a cell of jihadists or drug smugglers not out of a sense of conviction but rather a thirst for opportunity. The same thirst drove young Touareg men to find work in the French nuclear installations of In Ekker and Takormiasse in the 1960s or to travel *clandestino* to Libya and join Gadhafi's Islamic Regiment in the 1980s.

Touareg youth have not just been radicalised by Al-Qaeda. They have been radicalised for generations by a lack of opportunity and freedom. And opportunity works like an auction: the highest bidder usually wins. The nations of the Sahara need to bid high, not just in a financial sense, but in a social and political one, to keep their youth on track. That is all there is to it.

The most prevalent state of mind I encounter when talking to Touareg friends and acquaintances is bafflement. How did it all come to this? "What's happening to our once peaceful desert home? Mali, Al-Qaeda, Algeria, France, America, China, they're stronger than we are. It's as if we've just woken up," was how my musician friend from Tessalit once put it to me.

The world has to help the Touareg wake up and adapt their instinct for freedom to the realities of the modern world. It can be done. The Touareg question does have an answer. But it will require plenty of courage, investment and political skill. It will also need a season of deep reflection in those blue Saharan skies.

The Sahel: the Role of Algeria and the Ambitions of Morocco

The presence of the Moroccan monarch at the inauguration ceremony of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali triggered in Algeria a feeling of anxiety and of incomprehension as Algeria's support for Operation Serval had resulted in the unexpected arrival of Morocco in a zone that Algeria believed to be under its control. From Bamako to Tripoli, Morocco is seeking to play a role, as underscored by the Rabat Declaration on 14 November 2013. The unexpected and unpredictable consequences of Operation Serval could lead Algeria and Morocco to a confrontation, the first victim of which would be Mali. Like the Pakistani security services in Afghanistan, the Algerian security services will be unable to tolerate for a long time the growing influence of the Moroccan rival in a region considered strategic. The Moroccan activism in the Sahel is all the more difficult to accept for Algeria as its authorities had to resign themselves to accepting French intervention. It is also difficult for Algeria to hear the criticism concerning the lack of control over its border in the Sahel, as it considers that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Libya and France in Mali have destabilised its security policy in the region. Operation Serval is actually far from garnering the comprehension or sympathy of Algerian public opinion, as illustrated by the very representative remarks of writer Yasmina Khadra: "The Sahel problem, it is France which created it by attacking Libya. At that time everyone knew that the country of Gadhafi was a refuge for all the fighters in the region. By waging a war against the Libyan regime, they liberated all those mercenaries who joined Al-Qaeda," and he specified, "The crisis in Mali is not an African problem, but indeed a French one. We do not play with fire without getting burnt."[14]

The Sahel: the new theatre of Algerian-Moroccan rivalry?

With subtlety and intelligence, the Moroccan Kingdom has managed to gain diplomatic advantages from Operation Serval as demonstrated by the second regional ministerial conference on border security, held in Rabat on 14 November 2013. In the absence of Algeria, which considers itself to have been duped, Morocco wants to play a leadership role in both Mali and in Libya. The creation of a regional training centre for officers in charge of border security in the states of the region gives Morocco the tool needed to exert its influence and, in so doing, put in difficulty the regional structures piloted by Algeria.

Furthermore, for Algeria the willingness to satisfy specific needs of the populations in border zones appears to be an effort at possibly highlighting the "Touareg issue".

In the face of Algeria's unconditional support for the Sahrawi Saharan movement, Morocco now has significant retaliatory measures with the "Touareg issue". In short, if Algeria still hopes that Morocco will lose the territory of the Western Sahara, Morocco can raise "the Touareg issue" and the Touareg demand for Azawad which includes a portion of Algerian territory. Very influential in Mauritania and Senegal, Morocco is taking advantage of Operation Serval to expand its networks to Mali and Libya. Unlike Algeria, Morocco has the sympathy of the Libyan population because of its support for the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime. Moreover, the Kingdom maintains excellent relations with the monarchies in the Gulf, some of which, like Qatar, have ties to local militias. In the end, Morocco may hope to play the role of mediator between the Libyan government and the militias.

Of course, these unexpected developments for Algeria generate tensions between the two countries which have been spared the "Arab Spring" which may eventually lead to a crisis if they grow acrimonious and if the generals and the security services in Algeria believe that the territorial integrity of the country is threatened. It is now obvious that the support provided by President Bouteflika to Operation Serval serves, from a strategic point of view, Algeria's interests. The tensions between the President and the security services illustrate the diverging approaches. Since the Arab Spring, the Algerian authorities have been convinced that a plot is being hatched against them. Far from taking advantage of the "void" in the Sahel following the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime, the Algerian authorities are focusing their attention on the internal situation. A media onslaught associates the revolts of the "Arab Spring" with agents who are plotting to destabilise the region. Many believe that, after escaping the "Arab Spring", Algeria is still reportedly a target. Journalist Amar Djerrad stated that "Freedom House is well established in Tunisia."[15] Its objective now is allegedly to bring Algeria within its sphere of influence. The related program this time is called "new generation of militants for democracy in Algeria", after having failed in January and September 2011. According to the newspaper *Alfadjr*, it is supervised by the Tunisian minister responsible for human rights and a leader of the Ennahda movement, Samir Dilo. The Trojan Horse is allegedly an Islamist, so-called "moderate", political training in Algeria and specifies

that "Algeria should have fallen at the same time as Tunisia. In only two months (January and February 2011), there were almost twenty self-immolations in Algeria. It is said that the studios of Al-Jazeera were already set up in Oujda, Morocco, as of 23 January 2011 to film scenes of insurrection played by Moroccan extras in order to then have them pass as scenes that were really happening in Algerian cities. This is exactly what happened in the case of Benghazi and Tripoli."[16]

The security services thought that they had found the right response to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) by supporting its introduction in the Sahel, but the Arab Spring facilitated AQIM's return. The "clients" of Algeria in the Sahel hope to see it, in vain, take the place of Gadhafi's Libya. Destabilised and helpless, the Algerian security services no longer have confidence in their clients, whom they suspect of collusion with foreign operators like Qatar. For the Algerian authorities, the major concern is no longer the Sahel, but protecting the regime. After the attack on In Amenas, an editorial of *El Watan* dated 21 January 2013 asked: "Is there an external threat to the country? Who is really behind the attack at In Amenas and for what purpose?" and it went on to say that "one of the lessons of the Arab Spring is essentially the fact that it is dictatorships that create the conditions for foreign interference .... On the 50th anniversary of its independence, Algeria's challenge is to succeed in taking the democratic path, at risk of seeing its territorial integrity affected."[17] Concern is growing in Algeria, and many are worried about civil and military authorities' inability to understand what is happening in neighbouring countries.

In fact, for Algeria, the overthrow of the Gadhafi regime is perceived as a strategic mistake that helped local actors advance their own interests. The 2006 Algiers Accord is forgotten, as the Touareg seized the opportunity in January 2012 to make President Amadou Toumani Touré pay for his lack of respect. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Ansar Dine, joined by AQIM and MUJAO, drove out the Malian army and took control of northern Mali. But, very quickly, the "secularists" of the MNLA were defeated and chased away by AQIM jihadists who imposed their emirate in the Sahel. Far from considering this development as a threat, Algeria hoped to re-assert its influence over the MNLA and Ansar Dine. It hoped above all to avoid a military intervention in a region where its security services consider that they have sufficient intermediaries

thanks to a vast espionage network used to maintain the status quo. As long as AQIM and MUJAO threatened Bamako and not Tamanrasset, for Algeria and particularly its security services, it is France and Morocco that were targeted and not Algeria.

Operation Serval destabilised Algeria's security policy in the Sahel and reinforced Morocco's influence in this region. It would be wise to anticipate all the possible reactions of Algeria with respect to what appears to it to be a diplomatic and security defeat.

Role and efficiency of ECOWAS and Nigeria's ambitions in terms of regional cooperation to fight terrorism

Created in 1975 to promote the integration of West African economies, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) experienced difficult beginnings: its ambition quickly came up against the economic crises of the 1980s and rivalries between heads of state with very diverse external alliances and political cultures. The political upheavals of the early 1990s, and notably the conflicts that broke out in the region, gave it an unexpected vigour and helped it play a role which goes well beyond traditional diplomacy: ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping force, known by its acronym as ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) to Liberia in 1990, and to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau a few years later.

At the end of the decade (1999), these somewhat improvised initiatives were formalised through a Regional Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. Several structures were set up or institutionalised, in particular an early warning system, a Mediation and Security Council, and a peacekeeping force. This ambitious system was reinforced in 2001 through the adoption of a Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. In an era of democratic transitions on the African continent, ECOWAS established a direct link between the prevention of conflicts and the respect of fundamental political principles.

Over the past few years, ECOWAS has adapted to a new international context where security threats are more transnational rather than confined to the limits of state borders. It has expanded its spheres of activity and its approach in terms of security is henceforth focused on "human security", a re-orientation that is seen in particular in the 2008 Conflict Prevention Framework, a strategic document aimed at implementing its security commitments. Like the fight against weapons and drug trafficking or maritime insecurity, the fight against terrorism has thus been added to the organisation's priorities.

Until the early 2000s, terrorism was only a distant threat for ECOWAS, which was more concerned about armed rebellions: it is only briefly mentioned in the 1999 Mechanism. After 11 September 2001, the affiliation of armed Islamic groups, in particular Algerian groups, with the ideology of Al-Qaeda and the rise in power of religious extremist

movements in northern Nigeria fuelled concerns that the Sahel region and West Africa would become the new "cradle of terrorism". The region found itself mixed up in the dynamics of the "war on terror" conducted by the United States, and several countries benefited from US military assistance in the context of the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). ECOWAS took a long time to consider terrorism as one of the numerous threats to the peace and security of the region. The Malian crisis, which was a combination of an institutional and political crisis, armed separatist rebellion and the invasion of terrorist groups, forced it to act.

In February 2013 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS adopted its first strategy to fight terrorism, as well as an action plan. It uses the same definition of terrorism adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in its 1999 Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. Its strategy, which draws inspiration from the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, relies on three pillars: prevention, prosecution and reconstruction. Six priorities are defined: improving coordination between member states in the area of intelligence, police measures, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of terrorist crimes; strengthening the national and regional capacities to detect and prevent terrorist crimes; emphasising the rule of law, respect of human rights, and the protection of civilians in the war on terrorism; preventing and combating violent religious extremism; harmonising the responses to the terrorist phenomenon, notably counter-terrorism legislation; and promoting regional and international cooperation. The counter-terrorism strategy of ECOWAS provides for the establishment of a counter-terrorism coordination unit, an ECOWAS arrest warrant and a black list of members of terrorist networks. It entrusts the West Africa Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) and the Committee of Chiefs of Security Services (CCSS) with the responsibility of sharing sensitive information concerning terrorist activities at the regional level.

Within about 20 years, ECOWAS has established itself as an indispensable player in the management of security in West Africa. Its preventive diplomacy efforts have helped to defuse political crises, such as in Guinea in 2008-2009 and in Niger in 2009-2010. However, the organisation lacks a clear link between a shared political vision and adequate mobilisation of human and financial resources in order to achieve clearly defined and realistic objectives. Its limits thus become obvious when it is confronted with armed conflicts that

necessitate quick military intervention (as in Mali) or with complex threats, such as terrorism, which require a multidimensional response. ECOWAS's capacity to act in the area of security remains limited to the capacity to act of states that make up the organisation: despite a few examples of political stability coupled with economic progress over a significant period of time, ECOWAS still includes mostly weak states with barely or poorly governed zones and porous borders. The latter provides a fertile breeding ground for the emergence of locally entrenched radical movements and for the easy introduction of extremist groups which are initially foreign. The regional organisation lacks countries which are driving forces and which are capable of showing to others the path to follow to deal effectively with multiple threats to peace and security. Nigeria, a petroleum powerhouse whose population is greater than that of the other 14 member states combined, is the obvious candidate to assume this leadership role; however, its "natural" hegemony remains fragile and sometimes contested.

A regional power constrained by its internal contradictions

Since the Biafra War from 1967 to 1970, during which certain Francophone neighbours of Nigeria supported the secessionist cause, Nigerian authorities have realised that national security and regional leadership are intimately linked. From then on, Nigeria wagered on regional integration, playing a key role in the creation of ECOWAS in 1975 and in its revival in the early 1990s. Nigerian leaders personally became involved in several conflict zones in West Africa. Nigeria, with military force (estimated at more than 160,000 men) which far exceeds that of other member states, is indispensable in major peacekeeping operations at the regional level. Nigeria has also concluded bilateral security cooperation agreements with its immediate neighbours (Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin). Over the past few years, it has helped to train at its military schools numerous officers from almost all the member states of ECOWAS and has developed several military assistance programs, notably in Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, the Anglophone region where it exerts more naturally its influence.

Until the late 2000s, Nigeria had not paid as much attention to the terrorist problem and other major transnational threats such as drug trafficking and maritime insecurity in West Africa as Western countries, in particular the United States, would have liked. The latter always considered Nigeria an indispensable strategic partner in securing

petroleum resources in the Gulf of Guinea. As of 2009, when the rise in violence committed by the Islamist sect Boko Haram in the north of the country placed terrorism at the heart of national concerns, Abuja more clearly committed to enhanced cooperation with ECOWAS against terrorism.

Although it seems to have turned the page on brutal military regimes since the 1999 general elections, Nigeria remains a country confronted by immense security challenges which are intimately linked to political practices which are out of sync with the official democratic framework. The Nigerian federation still cannot claim to be a model country for the region in terms of effective responses to different forms of insecurity which weaken permanently the region at the political level and which also delay the hoped for moment when the economy will take off in a sufficiently strong and widespread manner in order to radically alter the region's perspectives. Nigeria faces several internal security problems—violence linked to the Islamist sect Boko Haram and its various factions or by-products in the north, repeated and deadly intercommunity confrontations in the Middle Belt in the centre of the country, as well as long-standing and ongoing armed rebellions in the Niger Delta in the south—which monopolise the attention of the federal government and its defence and security forces.

The difficulties of the Nigerian regime are less due to a lack of operational capacities than to a problem in the approach adopted to deal with an armed group consisting of various subgroups which are not isolated from society (...)

Despite their numbers, the Nigerian forces are struggling to deal with the level of violence experienced by the country, as shown in the report of the "Galtimari Commission". This commission was set up by President Goodluck Jonathan to propose solutions to end deadly attacks attributed to Boko Haram in the northeast. The Joint Task Force deployed in these regions and the declaration of a state of emergency did not succeed in ending the attacks and were even less successful in protecting the civilian populations which have been taken hostage in a war that is largely being waged in secret. The difficulties of the Nigerian regime are less due to a lack of operational capacities than to a problem in the approach adopted to deal with an armed group consisting

of various subgroups which are not isolated from society and thus local communities. While the phenomenon Boko Haram is linked to more complex political issues relating to a feeling of marginalization in northern regions and to political manipulation in the context of a violent competition for power at the local and federal level, Abuja has for a long time adopted an exclusively military response. The successes achieved against Boko Haram since the massive deployment of Nigerian forces in the states of Borno, of Yobe and of Adamawa in May 2013 have not put an end to the deadly attacks. The targeting of these attacks has even expanded in the second half of 2013, notably to pupils and students massacred within educational institutions. The lack of political discourse and Nigerian forces' failure to implement a security response which respects human rights limit the possibilities of cooperation between the authorities and the local communities in order to isolate the terrorist groups.

In terms of ECOWAS's guiding principles in the war on terrorism, Nigeria's efforts with respect to Boko Haram can hardly serve as models for the region. The dimension "promotion of the rule of law, respect for human rights and protection of civilians" has largely been neglected by the Nigerian regime. Despite a promising but recent incorporation of a civilian expertise specialising in the policies of "de-radicalisation" within federal national security services, the reputation of defence and security forces, and of the police even more so than the army, remains very poor. We might have expected that Nigeria would serve as inspiration for the development of counter-terrorism legislation in the other countries that make up ECOWAS, but the traditional politico-religious contradictions in Nigeria make any debate on terrorism a source of controversy. In 2005, a preliminary bill came up against the opposition of senators from the north. The adoption in early 2011 of the first counter-terrorism law, which gives extensive powers to security forces without judicial review, was also controversial.

The focus of regional cooperation on military aspects, and in particular the introduction of coordinated or joint patrols to monitor the borders, appears to reflect the imbalance in Nigeria and in other countries of the region between political attention and resources allotted to military responses compared with multidimensional civil responses. Cooperation with neighbouring states has developed these past years, essentially to deal with the threat of terrorism in northern Nigeria, which has progressively become concentrated in the border zone

with Niger, Cameroon and Chad. Created in 1998 to combat crime in this zone where all the trafficking networks flourish, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which consists of forces from Nigeria, Niger and Chad, has also been tasked since April 2012 with above all neutralising Boko Haram. The MNJTF works, and joint operations have been conducted, but the usual operational restrictions are regularly mentioned (insufficient fuel supply and lack of equipment). Nigerian officials also sometimes publicly criticise neighbouring countries' lack of aggressiveness with respect to alleged members of terrorist groups who cross the borders to escape the Nigerian military action. In late 2013, the criticism seemed to focus on Cameroon, which does not participate in the joint force and a country where increasingly members of Boko Haram and of Ansaru have been detected. More generally, Nigeria's neighbours, Cameroon and Niger, have adopted a very cautious stance, guided by the desire to avoid becoming direct targets of groups which have so far concentrated their attacks and their political rhetoric on the Nigerian government.

Nigeria and ECOWAS: a contested hegemony

Nigeria continues to view ECOWAS as an essential instrument of its foreign policy, a natural base from which it can exert its influence. However, in fact, it sometimes appears to be a "statistical hegemon" struggling to leverage its resources in order to make ECOWAS a true instrument of influence. Its financial, material and human commitment is significant: Nigeria contributes more than 60% to ECOWAS's budget and has lost hundreds of soldiers in peacekeeping operations in the region. However, its voice is not always the dominant one. Other countries, which contribute much more modestly to the functioning of the organisation, such as Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, exercise considerable influence in the decision-making process. Even though the rivalry between Francophone and Anglophone "blocs" has weakened since the 1990s, Francophone states, which are united by a common currency within the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), continue to be an influential sub-group within ECOWAS. These countries continue to favour using the assistance of powers outside of the region, firstly France, which is a real competing power of Nigeria in West Africa. The French military intervention in Mali in January 2013 once again exposed the limits of ECOWAS and in turn the limits of its largest military power, Nigeria, in complicated situations. The critical military role played by Chad alongside French forces in northern Mali and the relative marginalisation of Nigeria in

the establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) caused some frustrations on the part of Abuja. By withdrawing 1,000 soldiers from Mali, Nigeria was undoubtedly expressing a certain discontent, but also trying to ease the pressure on the most operational personnel of its army which is greatly in demand within its borders.

Beyond ECOWAS, Nigeria could be an influential player in the introduction of peace and security mechanisms on the continent, starting with the Sahel-Sahara zone, from which the terrorist threats come in part. Nigeria has indeed been among the countries involved in recent efforts of the African Union, which is anxious to learn lessons from the Malian crisis, and has regularly brought together intelligence and security services officials of the vast Sahel-Sahara zone to foster a so far laborious cooperation. But it does not always play a role which is equal to its current means and its potential.

Jihadist Groups in the Sahel After Operation Serval

When French troops intervened in central Mali on 10 and 11 January 2013 to halt the advance of a coalition of jihadist groups near the town of Konna, they triggered a dramatic re-orientation of jihadist groups in the Sahel, notably Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the AQIM splinter group known as the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the AQIM-linked Ansar Dine.[18] At the time of the intervention, these groups had been engaged in the previous year in a sometimes uneasy process of governing northern Mali. They also already had to cope with internal divisions and conflict between different leaders and commanders, as evidenced by disagreement over the implementation of Islamic law,[19] and the removal and subsequent departure in late 2012 from AQIM of veteran Algerian jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar, along with his fighters. While the following year has seen significant damage inflicted on these groups, the region has also witnessed their resilience. This paper will focus on the reorganisation of jihadist groups in and around Mali, with a particular focus on the changing nature of jihadism in the region after the French intervention.

On the one hand, the French intervention and subsequent military operations have dealt a series of serious blows to regional jihadist groups. French officials have publicly stated that military operations killed or captured roughly a third of Islamist fighters in Mali,[20] while other fighters were reportedly scattered to Libya, Tunisia, southern Algeria and Niger.[21] French and Chadian forces in particular killed several high-profile leaders in the first months of Operation Serval, such as the AQIM commander, Abdelhamid Abu Zeid and another key AQIM religious and operational leader, Mohamed Lemine Ould el-Hassen (Abdallah el-Chinguitti). In late 2013, French forces conducting operations north of Timbuktu also killed a number of jihadist fighters, including Belmokhtar's long-time spokesman and lieutenant Hassen Ould el-Khalil, known as Juleibib.[22] Malian and French forces also captured several prominent jihadist officials and commanders, including the former Islamic police chief in Gao, Aliou Mahamane Touré, and a judge of the Islamic court created under jihadist rule in Timbuktu, Houka Houka Ag Alfousseyni. Security forces in Mali have also continued to seize and destroy large caches of weapons and supplies, as with the destruction of nearly six tonnes of explosives found in late December in the Kidal region.[23]

On the other hand, these military operations and continuing militant attacks in northern Mali and the broader Sahel show the persistence and evolution of these groups. While fighters under Abu Zeid were on the front lines of the initial push towards Konna, alongside the largely Touareg Ansar Dine, and subsequently bore the brunt of the French intervention, Belmokhtar's troops appear to have been spared some of this onslaught. This escape allowed Belmokhtar's al-Mulathimeen ("the Masked") and al-Mouwakoune Bi-Dima ("Those who Sign in Their Blood") battalions, as well as MUJAO to stage high-profile and coordinated attacks at the Tigentourine gas facility in southern Algeria, as well as at a major uranium mine in Arlit and a military base in Agadez, in northern Niger.[24] The US State Department, which declared al-Mourabitoune—born of the August 2013 merger of Belmokhtar's groups and MUJAO—a terrorist group in December of that year, described the group as "the greatest near-term threat to US and Western interests" in the Sahel.[25] This is a reflection of the ability of Belmokhtar and groups under his influence to execute some of the most visible and successful attacks on regional and western targets ever conducted in the region.

MUJAO has also claimed credit for many of the suicide bombings and other attacks in Mali since the intervention (including in Gao, Aguelhoc, Tessalit and Ménaka). For its part, AQIM claimed credit for a combined arms attack in Timbuktu in March 2013 and a former AQIM commander who reportedly helped found MUJAO, Sultan Ould Badi, stated he was responsible for the suicide bombings that targeted UN peacekeepers in the key northern towns of Tessalit and Kidal in October and December 2013.[26] A Touareg AQIM commander, Hamada Ag Hama (Abdelkrim al-Targui), is believed to have given the order to kill two French journalists kidnapped in Kidal in November.[27] Moreover, a series of attacks in late 2013 against commanders and fighters of the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), attributed to jihadists, suggests a renewal of internal battles between different rebel groups in Mali and against international forces.

(...) violent trends demonstrate the continued ability of jihadist groups to operate in northern Mali (...)

These violent trends demonstrate the continued ability of jihadist groups to operate in northern Mali despite heavy military pressure, which bodes ill for security in the country as France begins to decrease the number of troops in Mali. While AQIM and other groups continue to operate in the north, other fighters, including many Touareg members of Ansar Dine, either escaped fighting or simply changed allegiances, joining the MNLA or different splinter groups of Ansar Dine that nominally sought political accommodation within Mali. Ansar Dine leader Iyad Ag Ghali is believed to be alive and still in northern Mali, and may have even played a role in freeing four French hostages who had been held for more than three years.[28] His deputy, Sheikh Ag Aoussa, lives openly in Kidal and has boasted to reporters that he frequently travels to the desert to meet with his compatriots, and that "the fight for Islam continues ... we're preparing our plan."[29]

Having looked at the current security situation in Mali and the Sahel, it is important to step back and examine two broad, concurrent trends in regional militancy: the internationalisation and localisation of these groups.

Until the Touareg rebellion of January 2012 and the subsequent collapse of northern Mali, many analysts believed that AQIM had largely failed in its mission to unite North Africa's jihadist groups. While the organisation's predecessor, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), had increasingly recruited Sahelian members after 2003, especially Mauritanians, it was still largely run by Algerians and maintained a focus on Algeria. However, the occupation of northern Mali showed the extent to which foreign fighters had converged on the region. While this included fighters from across the Sahara and Sahel, it also for the first time included large numbers of other North Africans, especially Tunisians, as well as Egyptians, Saudis and even some Pakistanis and Afghans. The attacks in Niger and In Amenas showed this dramatic internationalisation among Belmokhtar's fighting units, featuring a Nigerien member of Ansaru in the former, and Tunisians and Canadians in the latter.[30] AQIM units have also attracted a broad array of fighters from Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, the Western Sahara, Niger, Mauritania and elsewhere,[31] a notable adaptation given past reports of mistrust of non-Algerians among some AQIM units when Abu Zeid was still alive.[32]

Over the past two years, the jihadist groups remaining in the Sahel have also become highly localised and flexible. AQIM has developed

deeper roots in the Sahel over the years, recruiting from across the region but particularly in northern Mali. There, jihadist groups became thoroughly enmeshed in local social, political and economic networks, aiding recruitment and helping the groups to acquire protection and money. The occupation of northern Mali made possible the rapid promotion and recruitment of Malians and Nigeriens (especially ethnic Peul), not just from Touareg and Arab groups as had traditionally been the case, but also Songhai and even Bambara speakers from Mali's south.

Malians have been the public face of jihadist groups in several places, including Timbuktu, Kida and Gao and local leaders like Sultan Ould Badi and Abdelkrim el-Targui have re-emerged as prominent figures in the renewed fight against French and other forces. Even non-Malians like Belmokhtar and MUJAO leader Hamadi Ould Mohamed Kheiru have strong local ties to northern Mali and years of experience operating in these and other areas. Emblematic of this increasingly cosmopolitan and interconnected Sahelian jihadist picture is Talha al-Mauritani (also known as Abderrahmane), who was appointed in September 2013 to head AQIM's Katibat al-Furqan. According to local media reports, Talha has a Mauritanian father and a Malian mother (from Timbuktu)[33] and spent years in Libya before joining the GSPC in 2006.[34] This kind of path across the Sahara is one common to young Malians, Mauritanians and Nigeriens, and shows how "local" fighters can have wide-reaching regional and international ties.

The jihadist milieu in the Sahel is complex and rapidly evolving. Operation Serval killed many fighters, sent some underground and scattered others throughout the region. However, many fighters have remained in Mali and have reconstituted fighting units to conduct large-scale attacks on foreign targets. We have also seen a diversification in the last several years of jihadist groups in the region, with AQIM, MUJAO and groups loyal to Belmokhtar becoming increasingly international and more locally focused at the same time. While past and current military operations have limited the ability of their groups to operate, the jihadists in the Sahel are now better networked internationally than ever. They will be able to draw on regional and local recruitment, supply and fundraising networks in the future. These groups will therefore continue to present an enduring challenge for security in and beyond Mali.

Taking Stock of the Sahel's Nationalist Insurgency Movements

Several armed groups were created in Mali since the fall of 2011, among them the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Ansar Dine, the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA) and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA). While these groups have competing agendas, they unite from time to time for political gain. This paper describes unification efforts made in 2013, as well as inter-group discourse and conflict as these factions attempt to define their relationship with each other and with Bamako.

National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

The MNLA was created on 15 October 2011. Its primary objective is to carve out an independent state in northern Mali called "Azawad" in Tamasheq—a loose reference to a region that geographically covers northern Mali, western Niger and southern Algeria. Over the course of time, the MNLA lost control of the region to Islamists—including many aligned with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—who forced many MNLA cadres to flee into neighbouring countries. The Islamists' primary goal was to expand power across Mali and make it the first country in Africa to be ruled under a harsh interpretation of sharia law. When France intervened to fight these militant Islamists in January 2013, the MNLA returned to the north after brokering a peace accord with Bamako. However, this accord forced the MNLA to re-evaluate its initial goal of complete independence. The MNLA's new goals are to fight for autonomy inside the state of Mali, and to curry favour with an international community eager to stabilise the country.

The MNLA has faced several existential challenges since coming into being. The first was the creation of Ansar Dine, the Islamist Touareg faction, by former Touareg rebel leader, Iyad Ag Ghaly, in a bid to compete with and undermine the MNLA.[35] Secondly, Bamako has gained some leverage from its charge that the MNLA is guilty by association with terrorists as Ansar Dine's leadership is primarily composed of ethnic Touareg who have familial ties with some members in the MNLA. There is, however, little in the way of ideological affinity between these two groups.

Even though the MNLA is not the recipient of outside support, the group has been able to survive thanks to motivated fighters who want

an independent or autonomous Azawad. Among the armed groups in northern Mali, the MNLA is the only one that receives widespread support from the local population—a point contested by Bamako which seeks to minimise its influence. However, the MNLA remains riddled by internal conflicts. These disputes range from tribal differences to long-term strategic disagreements concerning how to deal with the newly elected government in Bamako. A case in point, Bamako asked the MNLA to relinquish all municipal and legislative positions in the Kidal region—a move that may weaken it significantly and ebb its popular support.

The MNLA is divided over the future of the movement. Some senior members such as its president, Bilal Ag Acherif, are willing to comply with Bamako's request lest non-compliance lead to confrontation with the Malian army, which enjoys the support of MINUSMA, the UN force charged with implementing peace in the country. From 28 October to 3 November 2013, the MNLA held private talks with the HCUA—an organisation still under Iyad Ag Ghaly's influence—to discuss merging both armed groups into a new organisation. Even though some of MNLA's political leaders[36] supported the merger, the fighters and civilian population who support the organisation opposed it.[37] The younger MNLA fighters were especially strident in their opposition following a heated internal debate. The MNLA leadership held a vote and indeed rejected the merger. Bilal Ag Acherif agreed to follow the majority vote and remains president of the organisation for now.

Ongoing clashes with the Islamists and ethnic and tribal disagreements also threaten the MNLA's future, as do pressures by France and the international community for peace in Mali. To survive, the MNLA has opted to forge a loose alliance with the HCUA and the Arab Movement for the Azawad (MAA), which claims to be a secular, non-violent group dedicated to the defence of Arab populations living in northern Mali. Unfortunately for the MNLA, these relationships may become its Achilles heel. Indeed, all three organisations maintain their own agendas to control the North after a peace settlement with Bamako is negotiated.

Ansar Dine

After Iyad Ag Ghaly's failed push to be the leader of the MNLA in October 2011, he founded Ansar Dine, an Islamist organisation with ties to AQIM. In June 2012, he used his military and strategic prowess

to undermine the MNLA, giving Islamist forces the upper hand in northern Mali until the French overran them in January 2013. Its members blended into the local population, underscoring the group's resilience.

There are indications that the organisation is quietly coming back to life in the region, principally in the mountains of Boghassa, where Ansar Dine plans to establish its headquarters. In October, several lieutenants[38] of Iyad Ag Ghaly were seen in the town of Kidal, where some believe France offered the latter the freedom to operate in exchange for the release of four French hostages in November 2013.

Given that Ansar Dine's military assets were not destroyed by the French intervention, it is safe to assume that it is vying to return to Kidal more determined than ever. Touareg elders in Kidal confirm that Ag Ghaly continues to communicate with leaders of the HCUA who were once his close associates. Ansar Dine and the HCUA could merge and rebrand into a new organisation whose goal would be to impose an Islamist agenda on northern Mali.

Islamic Movement for the Azawad

After the launch of the French intervention, some members[39] of Ansar Dine broke away to create the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA) in January 2013 under the leadership of Alghabass Ag Intallah, the former vice-president of Ansar Dine. Even though the MIA officially announced its willingness to combat terrorism in the region, its goals were never clearly defined and the international press tagged it as an offshoot of Ansar Dine. While the MIA leadership was received in Ouagadougou and Algiers, it never gained credibility on the ground and was dissolved on 19 May 2013. Its members joined the HCUA.

High Council for the Unity of Azawad

The HCUA was created on 2 May 2013 by Mohamed Ag Intallah, the older brother of Alghabass Ag Intallah. Its goal was to spearhead peace talks with Mali as an independent alternative to other Touareg groups. Following its creation, Ag Intallah called upon the MNLA and MIA to dissolve their respective organisations and join the HCUA.

The MIA's rallying to the HCUA increased the latter's credibility and its leaders were officially received in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania

and Niger. Some of its leaders also maintain close ties with Bamako. Following a tenuous agreement between the HCUA and MNLA, both organisations went on to individually sign the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement with Mali on 18 June 2013.

The HCUA has been a participant in the democratic process opened by the peace agreement. Three of its members ran for Parliament, all of whom represented the RPM, the party of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, commonly referred to as "IBK". These candidates are Mohamed Ag Intallah (elected in Tinassako), Ahmada Ag Bibi (elected in Abeïbara) and Inawelène Ag Ahmed (defeated in Kidal). Because of this relationship with Bamako, the HCUA is less of a political target. The more it cultivates a relationship with Bamako, the better are its chances for survival.

Like the MNLA, the HCUA, however, remains an alliance of contradictory forces. While some within its ranks maintain ties with the state, its Islamist component remains active. For instance, in November 2013, two French journalists were abducted and killed in Kidal. Associates of the HCUA[40] were arrested following the attack, further confirming suspicions of its association with Abdelkarim Al-Targui, a terrorist with ties to Ansar Dine.

Despite the recent failure of its attempted merger with the MNLA, the HCUA continues to look for support from a small but growing constituency in northern Mali. It is slowly eroding the MNLA's power base—an intra-Touareg struggle that will become more pronounced once final peace negotiations with Bamako begin. Six representatives from the MNLA, the HCUA and MAA are slated to travel to Bamako to negotiate and individually sign the final peace agreement. However, given the current push by Bamako to strip the Touareg (mainly the MNLA) of their municipal and legislative positions in northern Mali, some Touareg believe that signing a final peace accord could weaken the MNLA to a point where it has no leverage. This faction could play the role of a violent spoiler of the peace process.

Out of the Shadows: Demystifying Boko Haram and Ansaru

Boko Haram and Ansaru, which has been described as a breakaway faction of the former, despite retaining operational connections with it, are both considered "mysterious", and their leaders are often described as "shadowy". Yet, close analysis of all available information can clarify a number of questions about their objectives and strategies.

The first part of the discussion will show how Boko Haram and Ansaru have separate leadership, ideologies and linkages, but cooperate against common enemies, namely the West and the Nigerian government. Muhammad Yusuf, who founded Boko Haram in 2002, is revered as a "martyr" by the group's followers. A charismatic leader, he oversaw its expansion to over 100,000 followers by 2009. In July of that year, Nigerian security forces killed him extrajudicially near the group's main headquarters in Maiduguri, Borno State, along with 1,000 of his followers. One of his deputies, Abubakar Shekau, then repositioned Boko Haram as a jihadist group aligned with Al-Qaeda and launched an unrelenting insurgency against the Nigerian government, as well as Christians, Muslim leaders, and civilians who oppose Boko Haram. It has been responsible for the deaths of about 4,000 people in less than four years, and it may now have up to 6,000 fighters in its network.

Mamman Nur was also one of Yusuf's deputies, but he lost out to Shekau in the bid to lead the core faction of Boko Haram.[41] Nigerian officials believe that he trained with Al-Shabaab in Somalia after Yusuf's death and returned to Nigeria to mastermind the UN Headquarters bombing in Abuja on 26 August 2011. This attack was reminiscent of Al-Qaeda's bombing of the UN buildings in Baghdad in 2003 and Algiers in 2007. The UN bombing in Abuja also took place on the same a day a military barracks was bombed by AQIM in Algiers. Nur's internationalist ideology, as evidenced by his sermons alongside Yusuf before 2009, is remarkably consistent with that of Ansaru since the announcement of its "public formation" in January 2012.[42]

Like Nur, Ansaru's suspected leaders, Khalid al-Barnawi, Adam Kambar and Abu Muhammed, received training abroad; all three trained with AQIM in Algeria.[43] Nur's attack on the UN Headquarters in Abuja was also carried out with militants from Nigeria who trained

with AQIM in Algeria in the mid-2000s, when al-Barnawi, Kambar and Muhammed would have been there.[44] There is thus a strong likelihood that Nur, given his rivalry with Shekau, the attack on an international target like the UN, his foreign experience and internationalist ideology, has been a key influence in Ansaru. The group's kidnapping operations of a French family and French priest in Nur's native country of Cameroon in February and November 2013, also point to another linkage to Nur.

Boko Haram and Ansaru are distinct in their ideological orientation. Boko Haram is a *takfiri* organisation that accuses virtually all other Muslims of being apostates. Boko Haram is domestically-focused and rejects the secular federal system of governance in Nigeria, detests the presence in the north of Christian "migrants" from southern and central Nigeria, and violently contests the legitimacy of Muslim Nigerian political and religious leaders in the north, whom Yusuf long described as corrupt. Shekau also openly identifies with other "jihadist" theatres, such as Palestine, Chechnya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Mali, which are all places deemed to be "Muslim" and that are or were occupied—or perceived to be occupied—by non-Muslims.

Boko Haram embraces the Salafist creed. Yusuf stated in sermons before 2009 the following:

> *Other groups like the Salafists came up, insisting on return to the basics and the original teachings of the Prophet. This flourished for some time but when it was confronted with democracy, the unity and oneness of Allah was relegated to the background. We are in opposition to the security services, the government, western education, western civilisation and any institution aligned with them…*
>
> *We follow the ideology of the Salafists and any fatwa issued by a Salafist Islamic scholar on it we stand. No matter how important an Islamic scholar is, we need to know if he is guided by Salafist principles before we accept such a scholar. We will accept scholars who preach and follow the Qur'an, the Sunna and the hadiths. As a group we will not accept personal interpretations, opinions and judgments…*
>
> *Every teaching of a scholar must be supported by the writings and teachings of Salafists scholars. All Islamic scholars that*

undermine Ibn Taymiyya, Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna and Osama Bin Laden are not authentic Islamic scholars.[45]

Ansaru's messaging strategy, on the other hand, focuses on the defence of Muslims in Africa and elsewhere generally, as well as Muslims in Nigeria, especially those located in the Middle Belt. A list of the main attacks it carried out in the last two years demonstrates this dual focus.[46]

- Kidnapping and killing a British and Italian engineer of an Italian construction company in Sokoto in January 2012;[47]
- Kidnapping and killing a German engineer in Kano in May 2012 (which was claimed by and carried out with AQIM);[48]
- Attacking the Special Anti-Robbery Squad prison in Abuja in November 2012 and freeing dozens of prisoners;[49]
- Kidnapping a Frenchman from the compound of an energy company near the border with Niger in Katsina State in December 2012 (he escaped under unclear circumstances in November 2013);[50]
- Ambushing a convoy of three buses carrying 180 Nigerian soldiers through Okene, Kogi State, en route to Mali, killing two soldiers. Ansaru claimed the troops "were aiming to demolish the Islamic Empire of Mali" and warned African countries to "stop helping Western countries fight Muslims;"[51]
- Breaking into a prison and kidnapping and killing seven foreigners from a construction site in northeastern Nigeria's Bauchi State in February 2013;[52]
- Kidnapping a French priest in northern Cameroon who was helping refugees from Boko Haram violence in an attack jointly claimed at first with Boko Haram (he remains in captivity as of mid-November 2013).
- Ansaru was also likely responsible for the UN Headquarters bombing in Abuja on 26 August 2011 and the suicide bombings of churches in the Middle Belt in 2011 and 2012. Its members may also have participated in the kidnapping

of a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon on 19 February 2013 (the family was released weeks later in exchange for $3.14 million and the release of Boko Haram members from Cameroonian prisons).[53] Finally, its members participated in Mokhtar Belmokhtar's attacks at the energy plant in In Amenas, Algeria in Februrary 2013 and attacks in Niger in May 2013.

It is possible that Barnawi and Kambar (killed in 2012 by Nigerian security forces) led the attacks against international targets whereas Abu Muhammed may be responsible for AQIM-style suicide bombings of churches.

However, factions have been linked to the key Boko Haram-Ansaru courier, as well as Kabiru Sokoto, Ansaru's Kaduna "Shura" and AQIM funding streams. Those active in the Middle Belt, in particular, may have been supported by AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel, who in July 2009 issued condolences for the killing of Yusuf and in 2011 voiced support for Nigeria's Muslims after the outbreak of violence during the elections.[54]

Both Boko Haram and Ansaru have likely received training and weapons from AQIM. Yet, Ansaru's international ties run deeper than Boko Haram's, which primarily operates in the Lake Chad region. Ansaru members, like al-Barnawi and Kambar, are mostly Nigerians with militant origins dating back to their training in the Sahel in the late 1990s and early 2000s with future AQIM members, such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar, and Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) members. Ansaru first operated under the name "Al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel" in 2011, but in 2012 changed its name to Ansaru (*Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan*—the People for Supporting the Muslims in Black Africa). The name change may be attributed to AQIM leader Droukdel's advice to Sahelian militants in 2012 that it is "better for you to be silent and pretend to be a 'domestic' movement... There is no reason for you to show that we have an expansionary, jihadist, Al-Qaeda or any other sort of project."[55]

Five impediments remain to combating Boko Haram and Ansaru. There is no coordinated strategy targeting both groups that goes beyond the capture of individual leaders who are quickly replaced, ensuring that the cycle of violence continues. A more sustainable approach is needed, with army offensives followed by development

initiatives. There is also a lack of resources and commitment by the West to help Lake Chad countries combat both groups, in contrast with Western efforts elsewhere on the continent (Mali, Somalia). Nigeria's neighbours, Chad, Cameroon and Niger fear a backlash if they crack down too hard on Boko Haram. Furthermore, communication is difficult at the border between Nigerian officers and their French-speaking neighbours. The situation is further aggravated by the absence of effective security forces in the border region.

Finally, Boko Haram and Ansaru must be understood within the context of the multiple challenges facing Nigeria: sectarian conflict in the Middle Belt, the potential for instability that could be triggered by the 2015 elections, as well as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and southerners' responses to Boko Haram.

The Fragilities of the "Niger Model"

Until 2011, the international community was a prisoner of an exaggerated optimism concerning Mali, to the point that it ignored the numerous weak signals indicating the irreversible deterioration of the governance of the regime of Amadou Toumani Touré. In certain regards, the international community is in the process of retreating into the reassuring belief that Niger is an example of resilience within a very turbulent Sahel. While the situation in Niger hardly incites alarmism, the risks remain real indeed. Niger currently seems to be dependent on very fragile balances that are likely to be turned upside down in a brutal and lasting manner. This essay aims to analyse the functioning of these balances and to identify their vulnerabilities.

The first balance is at socio-political level in northern Niger and involves the integration system of the Touareg. This integration system includes financial compensation and the institutional integration of former Touareg rebels. This translates into the election of some of them in the context of decentralisation (Mohamed Anako, Rhissa Feltou, etc.) and the appointment of dozens of others as advisors to the prime minister, the president and the president of the National Assembly. This purchase of social peace is combined with moderate pressure on these former rebels (arrests, threats, etc.), as well as relative tolerance regarding the development of trafficking networks that act as social safety nets in northern Niger.

If this balance holds, and nothing indicates that it will not in the short term, it would be wise not to ignore its numerous limits. Among the former rebels, some have never laid down their weapons, starting with the Toubou leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara (FARS), Barka Wardougou, who is today a militia leader in Murzuq in southern Libya. Others, a number of them, have officially laid down their weapons, but remain active in trafficking networks and the blockade of routes. Several hundred former rebels or supporters of their cause are today armed in northern Niger. Moreover, the integration system of Touareg is extremely fragile: it relies on former rebel leaders (Aghaly Alambo, Rhissa Ag Boula, Mohamed Anako) who have only a very modest control over the Touareg youth, which accounts for 70% of the population in the north. This system is largely artificial as it is based on appointments more than organic integrations into the political and administrative system in Niger, while some of the leaders of decentralised communities, in particular

the president of the Agadez region, have only a very relative power compared with very powerful actors (traffickers) or actors appointed by the government (governor of Agadez). Similarly, numerous former fighters are maintained within a system of financial dependence based solely on international aid (commissions for weapons collections, UN Peacebuilding Commission, etc.). These limits in terms of integration demonstrate a certain lack of confidence between the Touareg populations and the state of Niger which renders the security balance very fragile and likely to be challenged by the slightest trigger. The history of Niger shows that a mistake made by the army of Niger (Tchintabaraden in 1990) or the imprisonment of former rebel leaders was sufficient to trigger rebellions. This same history reveals that destabilisation often came from Libya. From this point of view, not only the lack of reintegration of Touareg who returned from Libya in 2011 exposes them to a possible recruitment for a planned rebellion, but also it cannot be ruled out that a deterioration of the situation in southern Libya may force thousands of Touareg from Niger who still live there to return to Niger. Such a return would be extremely problematic.

The second balance concerns the trafficking networks and in particular drug trafficking (cannabis, cocaine and synthetic drugs). Along with Algeria and Mali, Niger is the third leading drug smuggling hub in the Sahara-Sahel region. This results in particularly well-structured drug smuggling networks which are comparable to those that continue to exist in a discreet form in Mali. Trafficking networks are headed by notable figures in the Arab community in the Tahoua and Agadez regions and involve members of the Touareg and Toubou communities who serve as smugglers, escorts and guides. These networks are particularly resilient due to their financial strength, a perfect knowledge of the terrain, a very large impunity, collusions within security forces, and contacts in the highest levels of Niger's government.

The issue of drug smuggling is particularly dangerous to the peace in Niger, as its management is most sensitive. On the one hand, a complacent approach or the complicity of the authorities allows the networks to develop and threatens to poison the state of Niger. On the other hand, a repressive approach or a destabilisation of these networks could present an undeniable risk of rebellion or the rallying of drug smugglers to the jihadist cause. In this regard, the Malian example offers many lessons: the Lemhar drug smugglers

became allies of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) when the state was no longer able to ensure the security of their trafficking networks, while these same drug smugglers, but also the Idnans and the Ifoghas, contributed to the war effort during the outbreak of the rebellion in late 2011. The transposition of these dynamics to the situation in Niger is far from fantastical, all the more if we consider the role played by drug smugglers in the rebellion of the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) in 2007. Moreover, the narco-terrorism is already a reality in Niger if we believe in, for example, the path taken by actors who were previously labelled as traffickers and who were involved in the attacks in Agadez and in Arlit. Finally, the current path of the state of Niger and its links to drug smuggling evoke in an eloquent manner that of the Malian state at the time of President Amadou Toumani Touré. The treatment of drug traffickers in northern Niger requires a permanent management of subtle balances. At the moment, the Western military presence has put a brake on the emergence of such scenarios.

Apart from these fragile balances, the primary vulnerability of Niger is the lack of security of its borders, which is conducive to the infiltration of jihadist groups. This problem is far from new since Niger has been dealing since 2008 with both kidnappings and attacks, for which Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) or the MUJAO have claimed responsibility. The new element is above all linked to the development of situations in each of the border states from which the terrorist threat emanates: Libya, Mali, and Nigeria. In Libya, the lack of a state and, to a lesser extent, of *thuwwar* ("revolutionaries"), who are able to ensure a minimum degree of order in the south poses a permanent risk of infiltration into Niger of groups from a region that stretches from Ghat to Oubary. The Niger-Mali border constitutes without a doubt a zone that is as relatively uncontrolled as the Niger-Libya Salvador Pass area, both on the Niger side in the vicinity of Tassara and on the Mali side in the Menaka desert. This zone constitutes the zone of influence of the MUJAO and of Al-Mourabitoune until Tillabery. Finally, the southern border of Niger is directly affected by the anarchy that reigns in northern Nigeria and in particular in the State of Borno, even though the actions of Boko Haram are mostly concentrated to the east of Maiduguri, toward the Cameroonian border. Control of the populations on both sides of the border is very difficult, and there is no doubt that numerous sleeper cells of Boko Haram exist on the Niger side. Apart from an attack conducted by Nigerian fighters, it cannot be ruled out that cells in Niger may import the cause defended by Boko Haram,

notably by focusing their demands on oil resources in southeast Niger. The expulsion of Izala from Nigeria to Niger showed in the past the feasibility of such a scenario.

In conclusion, one question arises. Is the Malian scenario possible in Niger? In many respects, the answer is no, at least in the short term. First, the French and American military presence is undoubtedly a safety net for the government of Niger, even though this makes Niger an ally of the West and hence a terrorist target. Also, the situation in Niger is very different. AQIM has no base in Niger and perhaps not even a sleeper cell, unlike MUJAO and Boko Haram, which have sleeper cells in the west and south of the country. The terrorist threat has thus not taken hold in the north of the country as was the case in Mali, despite networks with links to terrorist groups, in particular among the drug smuggling networks in Tassara (but not only there) and an undeniable rise in Salafist Islam among former rebels based in the region of the Aïr Mountains. Lastly, it should be recalled that the Malian scenario was triggered by the return from Libya of Malian Touareg, notably a senior officer, and of the involvement of a non-pacified former rebel, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga. At this stage, the situation in Niger does not possess the same characteristics, but the volatility of the geopolitical configurations and of alliances between groups warrants caution.

Violent Extremism as a Threat to Niger's Stability

The Malian crisis shed some light on the presence of well-established and politically active networks of jihadist groups in the Sahel region. Their presence was well known but what was novel in the case of northern Mali was their ability to destabilise local states. Following the French military intervention, jihadist groups' political agenda is adjusting to the new geopolitical context. While their capacity to destabilise the state in Mali has been reduced, these groups could be tempted to transfer their activities to neighbouring countries, and more particularly to Niger.

To some extent Niger might appear as an interesting target for violent extremism. Political stability is not Niger's main asset: since independence in 1960, the country has had no fewer than seven republican regimes and four military coups. It is located at the heart of a turbulent region marked by political and religious violence in northern Nigeria, Touareg separatist and armed Islamist movements in northern Mali, inter-communal violence and state collapse in southern Libya. However, despite its neighbours' instability and the general doom-laden discourse, Niger has not been plunged into violence.

This paper assesses current risks pertaining to the spread of violent extremism in Niger. The first two sections deal with the two main networks of jihadist activities, the first one is more or less closely related to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and/or the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and the second one to Boko Haram. Although connections exist between these networks, we chose to distinguish their activities in our analysis. In the last section we discuss how the growing focus on jihadist movements might actually obscure other challenges to security and stability linked to that country's religious dynamics.

Jihadist threats from and in the north: what we know, what we don't know

Armed jihadist movements that began to emerge in the Sahel in the early 2000s developed complex relationships with the local populations, rebel movements, criminal gangs, as well as with state authorities. In Niger, the first armed incidents took place in 2003 with clashes between the Niger armed forces and US special forces, on

the one hand, and former members of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), on the other. In 2007, the GSCP changed its name to AQIM. It announced its presence with the abduction of Western hostages in the Sahara and first became known in Niger in 2008. Initially, the organisation did not operate on Nigerien soil but outsourced abductions to local criminal groups who transferred hostages to northern Mali, where AQIM consolidated its presence in the 2000s. In northern Niger, the organisation has scattered local contacts and arms caches identifiable by GPS rather than a proper rear base.

It changed its strategy in 2010 and conducted direct attacks against the army or Western interests in Niger. In January 2010, a clash between Niger's forces and elements allegedly linked to AQIM took place near Tilia. In March, an attack on the Tiloa barracks, near the border with Mali, left five of Niger's soldiers dead. Several sources also recorded another attempted attack on the same barracks. In September 2012, a small group in possession of Semtex explosives was intercepted in the Arlit region. The threat of an attack using explosives on mining installations in Niger was therefore apparent well before May 2013 and the suicide attacks on both Arlit and Agadez.

Despite a probably small presence, AQIM's actions had a major impact in Niger. The abductions jeopardised tourism, which had been doing well at the beginning of the 2000s and led to a downsized Western presence in Niger, which was concentrated in Niamey. While in the first half of the 2000s, the country did not appear to be one of the areas most under threat in the Sahara, Niger is now presented, along with Mali, as one of the strategic theatres of the fight between jihadist groups and Western countries.

Over this time period, the discourse of Niger's authorities gradually changed. President Tandja only used the rhetoric of the fight against terrorism to convince Western countries to help him in his battle with the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ), a largely Touareg group, while President Issoufou now presents the fight against terrorism as one of the main issues of his presidency. As with Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali and his counterparts in Mauritania, it may be that he saw an opportunity to gain access to resources deployed in the fight against terrorism. However, this involvement is double-edged. For example, it led him to adopt a more hawkish stance toward the Malian crisis.

There is a certain amount of criticism of Nigerien's participation in the military intervention in Mali. Some, including among Niger's leaders, fear that the public will be receptive to the radical Islamist discourse that depicts the conflict as a religious war. Some predict that Niger will become a target for retaliation by groups wanting to punish it for allying with Western forces. The unprecedented twin attacks of 23 May 2013 in Arlit and Agadez, claimed by groups linked to AQIM, have fuelled fears of a spill-over of the terrorist threat into Niger.

Since the start of the Malian crisis, the government has intensified monitoring of preaching in some mosques. Although such surveillance is not new, it shows that the authorities are becoming increasingly nervous about the threat of jihadist cells establishing themselves in Niger.[56] There are also concerns that the Aïr region could serve as a refuge for AQIM members who have had to leave northern Mali. Although the movement's prestige is thought to be weak in this Touareg-majority region, its financial resources could attract recruits. As a former Touareg elected representative said, "AQIM is a business that pays better than Areva". Some people fear the development of links between religious radicalism and Touareg interests, as occurred in northern Mali.

The establishment of MUJAO in the Gao region, on the border with Niger, is another source of concern. The movement's leaders come from various Arab communities in the Sahel-Sahara region, often perceived to be "white populations". However, the group also recruits "blacks" in the Niger Valley, particularly young Songhais and Peuls. These local recruits include Nigeriens who found refuge in their country of origin from the French airstrikes in Mali.[57] Links have therefore developed between Nigeriens and the armed jihadist movements in Mali. However, it remains difficult to say to what extent they would continue the armed struggle in Niger. Some of them joined the MUJAO out of opportunism, others out of loyalty to the cause.

There are plenty of reasons to worry that terrorist attacks will increase in Niger. However, the country should not overestimate these risks or misconstrue their nature. Movements that challenge government control over the territory, such as Boko Haram and Ansar Dine, are weak. AQIM has not yet found an Iyad Ghali in Niger, but they are clearly looking for such a charismatic figure. On the other hand, abductions and attacks against Western interests are more likely. They could be sufficiently serious to threaten the stability of a fragile

government that is exposed by its hawkish positions on Mali. Finally, it should be remembered that, in Niger's recent history, the main source of violence is less religion than the state itself. The fight against terrorism has resulted in only limited violence against the civilian population in Niger, but recent developments in Nigeria should encourage the government to remain vigilant

Boko Haram: a policy of prudence

Political and religious violence in northern Nigeria has regularly spilled over into Niger. In the early 1980s, the followers of Maitatsine, including many Nigeriens, fled from the Nigerian army's violent repression and crossed the border into the regions of Maradi and Zinder. In the 1990s, the Izala movement in northern Nigeria recruited many followers in southern Niger. Its desire to purify Islamic practices and its critique of the Sufi brotherhoods caused tension that led to the burning of mosques and clashes among believers. Although Niger was worried about the possible spread of religious tension within its own territory, it did not adopt the same repressive policies towards these radical religious groups as its Nigerian neighbour. It preferred an approach that combined relative tolerance, surveillance of preachers, and targeted action.

The recent activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria have provoked renewed concern. Engaged in an armed struggle with the Nigerian security forces since 2009, the movement has developed rear bases in Niger, especially in the regions of Diffa and Zinder. The Nigerien authorities and the Western embassies in Niamey are particularly worried. So far, Niger has provided a refuge and not a theatre of operations for Boko Haram, but there are some indications of a possible change of strategy.

Throughout 2012, the movement strengthened its contacts with jihadist groups in northern Mali, although the extent to which they exchanged recruits, material and money remains unknown. In February 2012, in the Diffa region, the Nigerien police dismantled a network of fifteen people who were preparing an operation against the local military garrison. Since early 2013, violence has reached a new level in the state of Borno, causing an influx of about 40,000 civilians into the Diffa region. The authorities fear that Boko Haram activists are infiltrating the area. In June, an attack on Niamey prison caused serious concern. Although it is still unclear who organised the

operation, several Boko Haram members were among the escaped prisoners. Finally, the recent development of Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group that focuses on Western targets, has renewed fears of abductions and attacks against foreign interests in Niger from bases in Nigeria.

Nigeria has encouraged its neighbour to act more firmly in the fight against Boko Haram. In October 2012, the two countries signed agreements to organise joint border patrols. Anxious to avoid aggravating the situation, however, Niger adopted a cautious attitude toward Boko Haram. It is more concerned about stopping spill-over effects from northern Nigeria than repressing a movement that remains quiet in Niger. While Nigerien authorities often identify Boko Haram as the most worrying threat to Niger's stability, Western donors tend to neglect relatively the Nigerian border and to increasingly focus on the north and more specifically on the Salvador Pass between southern Libya and northeastern Niger.

Beyond violent extremism: Islam, stability and the state

Since the 1990s, religious associations, particularly those that claim allegiance to Islam, have been playing an increasingly prominent role in public affairs and in what are sometimes heated debates on social and political questions. Their first national protest movement took place in 1993 in response to a government bill for a "family code". Many Islamic representatives rejected the bill, claiming it promoted Western values that contradicted Islam. Faced with strong mobilisation, the government dropped the bill. In March 2011, demonstrations took place in Niamey following rumours that the transitional government was also preparing to approve a family code. More recently, in January 2013, demonstrations took place against a bill to protect girls' rights to secondary education. The government is often accused of being influenced by Western countries that are said to be trying to break down the values of Islam, impose birth control and reduce population growth in Muslim societies, under the cover of protecting women's rights.

It could be argued that religious organisations, not actual political parties, are the main opposition force in Niger. These associations do not only play an opposition role; they also actively promote a "re-Islamisation" of society, which for some means the Islamisation of the state. Since 1999, the constitution requires that the president

of the republic, the prime minister, the president of the National Assembly and members of the Constitutional Court swear an oath on the holy book of their faith. During the debates on the *tazartché* in 2009 (when President Tandja attempted to change the constitution to maintain his rule), the Collective of Niger Islamic Associations (CASIN) formally put forward a proposal for a new constitution that would end the separation between state and religion.

The growing influence of Islam on the state reflects increasing conservatism and a desire to strengthen identity. It also represents the emergence of an Islamic civil society that wants a moralised public life, while the government finds it difficult to base governance on secular principles. Islam's role in public life should not be interpreted in a simplistic way; it is plural and reflects the extreme fragmentation of Nigerien civil society. Political Islam is developing in Niger, but it would be exaggerated to say that all forms of its expression belong to fundamentalist and jihadist currents, which remain a minority.

Although it is engaged on the side of its Western allies in the fight against armed terrorist groups, the government must also cater to the section of public opinion that believes the war against terrorism is an attack on Islam. Caught between the imperatives of regional security and popular expectations, the government presents two faces to the public: one clearly sides with its Western allies in the fight against terrorism, while the other advertises its Islamic credentials in its quest for popular legitimacy.

The Economics of Militancy and Islamist Extremism in the Sahel

This paper discusses the economics of militancy and Islamist extremism in the Sahel by analysing the nature of power dynamics, the characteristics and impact of illicit economic activities and finally discussing options for shifting from a criminal to a legal economy. After Moammar Gadhafi's death, migrants returned to the Sahel and joined forces with groups such as the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) and other disaffected groups mobilised in Mali to stage an uprising against the state, utilising traditional ties with local communities to forge mutual partnerships with criminal networks to consolidate gains from an emerging criminal economy through kidnapping, hostage-taking, smuggling of contraband goods and tax collection from smugglers.

Identifying the critical power dynamics and actors in the Sahel

In 2012, the MNLA formed temporary and opportunistic alliances with militant and Islamist groups to challenge the state. This alliance was reinforced by:

- Support from Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO);
- Touareg soldiers who defected from the Malian army;
- A "merger" of MNLA with the Northern Mali Touareg Movement (MTNM), a remnant group of the rebels who participated in the third rebellion[58] in Mali; and
- Active political contacts outside Mali who provided logistical support and disseminated MNLA's nationalist agenda and activities.

However, relations among the militant groups became adversarial due to ideological, economic and religious differences with each group establishing a base in one of the main cities: AQIM in Timbuktu, MUJAO in Gao and Ansar Dine in Kidal

AQIM crafted reciprocal ties with the local communities, criminal networks and perhaps political actors in Mali in order to consolidate its gains and advance its political and military strategies in the Sahel.

The group connected to the local population using marriages, close cultural affinities, religion, skin colour and the exploitation of their superior economic power to purchase goods in order to gain loyalty and support from Touareg groups. Added to this, extremist groups, traffickers and local communities support one another, and there is a reciprocal expectation of what each group can bring to benefit the other, in terms of financial inducement, information, intelligence and local knowledge of routes and oases. This interconnectedness with the local communities facilitated the AQIM's manoeuvrability and adaptability, and enabled the group to recruit fighters and other collaborators who served as guides and logisticians—providing information on tourists, law enforcement agencies, and warren of safe houses.

Nature and impact of illicit economic activities

In this section, we discuss the multifaceted nature, type and size of criminal activities which were undertaken by the multiple groups in the Sahel. Kidnapping for ransom became one of the several methods used to raise funds and court publicity.[59] Victims included nationals of France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Canada, Switzerland, Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as several African countries, and the kidnappings were executed by a loose arrangement of a multiplicity of groups including:

a. local criminal groups that act as contractors and conduct kidnap operations, subsequently delivering their hostages back to extremists groups, especially AQIM leaders for a fee; and
b. rebel groups and their local collaborators who exploit already established networks for providing information on routes, the presence of tourists, the activities of soldiers or security, a warren of safe houses and, in some instances, the connivance of law enforcement agencies.

The groups engaged in kidnapping and hostage-taking, particularly AQIM, have possibly received over US$200 million in ransom payments since 2003. Payment for a Western hostage is estimated on average at US$6.5 million.[60] Northern Mali is largely used as an operational area for trading hostages. Actual kidnappings are carried out across the border in Niger, Mauritania, Tunisia and Algeria. Since 2003, about 63 Westerners have been kidnapped as represented in Table 1:[61] [62]

Table 1.0: Size of kidnapping activities since 2003

Year	Number of hostages	Area of operation/ capture	Mode of payment	Country which paid ransom
2003	32	Libya; transferred to Algeria and Mali	€5million	Germany
2007	4	Killed in Mauritania		
2008	4 (Austrians 2; Canadians 2)	Austrians in Tunisia; Canadians in Niamey, Niger	US$2.4million; other hostages released in exchange for AQIM prisoners	Austria paid for Austrians
2009	11	5 in Eastern Mali; 1 in Menaka, Mali; 3 in Mauritania; 2 in Mauritania	Some hostages released in exchange for AQIM's prisoners; US$4.8 to US$12.7 million	Spain (paid for the 3 Spanish hostages) No indication of ransom payment for other hostages
2010	8	7 in Arlit Uranium Mines, Niger	3 released; €90 million demanded for the others	No indication of payment
2011	3	2 in Niamey 1 in Djanet, Algeria		No indication of payment
Total	62			

Though kidnapping activities have contributed to and promoted the growth of the criminal economy, it has had adverse effects on the economy, hampering for example tourism as people prefer to work in the lucrative criminal industry. Also, large numbers of undocumented workers migrate to North African countries as tabulated below:[63]

Table 2.0: Size of irregular migrants in North Africa

Country	Number of migrants
Libya	750,000 – 2.5 million
Algeria	230,000
Mauritania	68,000
Tunisia	35,000
Morocco	Unknown

Mutually beneficial partnerships exist among the militant groups and criminal networks who are involved in the smuggling of arms, cigarettes, drugs and people which generates about US$1 billion a year. AQIM, for instance, has collaborated with local Touareg and Berabiche tribes to traffic cocaine, hashish and counterfeit tobacco. Militant groups have networked with South American narcotics

traffickers, which has substantially improved their potential to raise income for extremist activities; enabled them to learn more professional methods of contraband transport; and provided access to light and medium weight arms that can easily be packaged along with the cocaine. Militants also provide convoy protection for traffickers, guide them across the desert, and provide fuelling and water facilities. This has created a mutually beneficial collaboration leading militant groups to gain access to the weapons, funds, and personnel needed to facilitate their operations. Criminal groups also benefit from the enforcement capacity of the militants.

Temporary alliances among militant groups with trans-Saharan traffickers are possibly enhanced by protective relationships with the top hierarchy of the military, intelligence services, police and customs and civil servants, who facilitate the movement of goods. Irregular routes for smuggling activities across the Sahara to Europe are especially controlled by Touareg nomads using SUVs and cell phones

(...) it has become the trend for militant and extremist groups to provide safe passage and protection to traffickers in exchange for a percentage, about 10-15% of the total face value of the trafficked goods.

On occasions, when militant groups do not participate directly in the contraband trade, they tax smugglers who generate income from contraband goods.[64] Increasingly, it has become the trend for militant and extremist groups to provide safe passage and protection to traffickers in exchange for a percentage, about 10-15% of the total face value of the trafficked goods.[65]

Gains from criminal enterprises have helped militant groups become well-funded and self-sustaining organisations. Profits from ransom and trafficking activities are used to procure equipment and vehicles which allow the fighters to operate with a high degree of mobility and coordination in the desert. Proceeds from the criminal economy are laundered through front companies, namely hotels, restaurants and automobile companies, and challenges the legal economy.

Shifting from a criminal to a legal economy

Any approach to shift local beneficiaries of the criminal economy has to empower beneficiaries and provide sustainable sources of livelihood for the local community. Possible incentives include:

- The provision of legitimate opportunities through the equitable distribution of national resources;
- Youth empowerment through education and job creation;
- The reorientation of communities away from radical groups and opportunities provided by the criminal economy;
- Naming and shaming of local sponsors of militancy and Islamist extremism;
- Public education interventions harnessing the active involvement of the local community to cooperate with law enforcement agencies and report criminal activities in their communities; and
- Good governance to build the trust of local beneficiaries in state institutions.

Illicit Economies and Emerging Patterns of Organised Crime in Libya

As Libya moves forward in its political transition, organised criminal behaviour, illicit trafficking and trade, as well as the armed groups that perpetrate them are having a decisive impact. The argument that organised crime can serve as a spoiler to peace and development has assumed the status of conventional wisdom. But the rhetoric rarely transforms into tangible efforts to analyse and address the issue within the context of peace-building or state consolidation. This paper draws heavily from the 2013 report, *Profits and Losses* (United States Institute of Peace, or USIP), based on more than 200 individual interviews across all regions of Libya and its major urban and rural centres. The study aims to improve understanding of the nature of illicit trafficking and smuggling in the country and to identify emerging patterns of organised crime and their impact on state consolidation and stability.

The emerging illicit economy of contemporary Libya is comprised of four interconnected markets: weapons, migrants, drugs and smuggling of subsidised goods in and out of Libya. The four markets have developed a natural hierarchy in terms of both their financial return and their strategic importance; the spread of weapons and the provision of violent protection stand at the apex. The widespread prevalence of weapons has completely changed the game in Libya, as the security vacuum following the 2011 revolution has been filled by a collateral (and now enabling) industry in the form of criminal protection. Any effort to suppress criminal activity will now have to address the transactions that are made to ensure protection, as these have become a defining feature of the evolving criminal market and serve to cripple the legitimacy and the applicability of the state.

The dynamics of criminal activity and the development of illicit markets have taken different trajectories in the urban, coastal cities to the north, compared with the border towns and communities in the country's periphery. The dynamics are, however, interconnected, and ironically it is increasingly the criminal economy that is binding the regions of Libya together, rather than the efforts to build a system of joint and inclusive governance.

The urban hubs of Tripoli, Misrata and Benghazi are vibrant illicit markets in their own right. The cities also house infrastructure critical

to both licit and illicit trade (ports and airports) and are hubs of political activity. Demand for prescription drugs is high, and a nascent market for illicit recreational drugs is also in evidence.

While regional disparities exist in the borderlands of Libya, and balances of power at a sub-regional level have shifted, the specifics of the local illicit economy and the players rising to power in each of the main regions are facets of the historical context and the local experience of the revolution itself. Local conflicts in many places are driven by competition over illicit resources, and the capacity to provide or guarantee protection for illicit trade has become a major lever of influence.

Universally, though, criminal control is being consolidated into fewer hands, and groups that have acquired the most resources illegally are best placed to exploit their position to leverage further control and political influence. The window of opportunity to break the linkages between crime and statehood is drawing to a close.

Summary of implications

The evidence gathered in the USIP study on the dynamics and political economies of criminal behaviour in Libya suggests that an appropriate response to organised crime may rely less on justice and security interventions and more on a carefully calibrated strategy of political management coupled with well-deployed development approaches. The response also must undercut the market for protection and re-establish state control. This requires:

1. An effort to draw a number of marginalised groups, the Toubous and the Touaregs in particular, as well as a range of other border communities, into an agreement based on political inclusion and social and economic benefits, with responsibilities to assist securing the country's periphery and border regions in cooperation with the central government.
2. A careful transition from economic policies of cash pay-outs and commodity subsidies towards the creation of sustainable economic opportunities, particularly for young people, in both border regions and the cities.
3. A greater effort to educate the public about the costs and consequences of engaging in illegal activities, especially the wide and accepted involvement of many communities in the smuggling of migrants and of pharmaceutical workers who aid

the illegal distribution of prescription drugs.

4. Re-establishing a legitimate "market" for state security by breaking down the current arrangements of criminal protection and reinstating state institutions of security, civilian policing and border control. Little effort has been made to understand the nascent initiatives being developed by many towns and cities to fight crime, whereas these may in fact hold the key to building a much more effective and sustainable response.
5. Given the speed at which trafficking routes and criminal markets can shift, the international community must be cognizant of Libya's vulnerabilities within wider regional and international contexts. Efforts to address organised crime, trafficking and security in neighbouring countries (e.g. Mali), or even the failure to do so, can increase the threat to Libya's stability and political transition.

Conclusion

Libya's geographic position along the Mediterranean coast and in a region experiencing great political fragility speaks to the importance of getting the policy mix right. The effects of potential criminal contagion, even if it occurs slowly and insidiously, will reverberate in North Africa, the Sahel and potentially within Europe itself. There has been a growing debate as to the implications of organised crime for state building: Libya is rapidly emerging as a test case, and the cost of failure here is considerable, for Libya as a democratic state, its citizens and the broader region.

From an economic perspective, the reduction in subsidies is the key to decreasing commodities smuggling to Libya's neighbours. But doing so carries great political risk, not least of which is the fact that huge numbers of people in all the border areas earn a livelihood through smuggling. Disrupting the current arrangements may well lead to greater discontent with the centre, from where such policies would emanate, and may also lead to greater competition for the remaining illicit markets. Longer-term solutions can rely on a careful transition from commodity subsidies and cash hand-outs to the creation of sustainable and legitimate economic opportunities, particularly for young people, in both border regions and the country's cities.

Law enforcement institutions in Libya, widely derided by the population for their association with the Gadhafi regime, have for the most part broken down. While there is some evidence that many ordinary

people now want the government to re-establish a reformed system of policing, police and prosecutors alike outline the challenges of doing so. Most importantly is the degree to which militia groups in some areas see themselves both as the guardians of the law and the natural inheritors of the economic benefits of illicit markets. The long-term establishment of effective and legitimate systems of law enforcement will be a critical factor in responding to the challenge of organised crime.

While many Libyan leaders concede that criminal activity and organised crime are already key challenges for the transition, the majority argue that they can only be dealt with later, when the state is consolidated and the transitional political process has run its course. By contrast, the USIP report demonstrates that organised criminal behaviour, illicit trafficking and trade, and the armed groups that perpetrate them are already harming the transition—empowering some actors over others, generating potentially intractable resource conflicts, and weakening the ability of the central state, both by limiting its reach but also by corrupting its key institutions—at a time when a key requirement is to consolidate institutions of statehood.

Africa, Itinerant Jihadists and Regional Instability

A global problem

Some suggest the jihadist threats in the Sahara and Sahel are local or regional in scope; however, this is not the case. The jihadist threat from North Africa is truly global in its dimensions. Even a cursory overview of the involvement of North Africans as Al-Qaeda (AQ)-linked itinerant jihadists from Afghanistan to Iraq validates this perspective. This paper discusses itinerant jihadists rooted in North Africa and beyond, underscoring the fact that global jihadism not only supersedes the atomisation of Al-Qaeda's central body but is also a growing security threat. North African governments weakened following the "Arab Spring", increased sectarian tensions in the Arab and Muslim-majority world (especially in the Levant) and the proliferation of weapons in the aftermath of the Libyan conflict are some of the main factors contributing to the growth of the foreign fighter networks.[66]

Syria and itinerant North African jihadism

The flow of African jihadists to fight abroad is, of course, nothing new. Indeed, it was two Tunisians that killed Northern Alliance Leader Ahmad Shah Massoud in Afghanistan as an apparent favour to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the run-up to the 9/11 attacks. Nevertheless, the flow of foreign fighters from North Africa presents an ongoing security problem.

The Sinjar records, acquired in 2007 on the Syrian-Iraqi border and analysed by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, provide a unique quantitative perspective on North African involvement in global jihadism. Most observers of international terrorism will agree that the same patterns witnessed in these documents are again alive and well in different theatres, especially in Syria. As observed in Iraq, North Africans make up a large percentage of the foreign fighters on the Syrian rebel side, many of whom are aligned today with the AQ-linked Jabhat al-Nusra faction.[67] In 2013 alone, the Tunisian government announced that 800 of its citizens were fighting alongside Islamist rebels in Syria—likely far fewer than the actual number of combatants from that country. Further, in a testament to the scope of the problem, Libya's foreign ministry publicly announced in spring 2013 that it had no control over citizens who were leaving the country to join the Syrian uprising.[68]

Yet it is not simply Africans leaving to combat perceived threats to Islam outside of the continent that speaks to the global nature of African militancy: it is also the flow of jihadists *into* Africa. The arrest of a French citizen in Mali, Gilles Le Guen (also known as "Abdel Jelil") illustrates this point, as does the investigation into the January 2013 attack on the natural gas plant at In Amenas in Algeria. The terrorists who perpetrated the attack were able to recruit individuals from Canada to join the operation. In sum, for militants who share the worldview of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Africa has many front lines and "occupied territories" that also require the *fard 'ayn* (individual duty) support of fighters to combat non-Muslim oppressors. This was a primary ideological contribution developed by one of global jihad's original architects, Abdullah Azzam.[69]

Viewed slightly differently, the development of extremist states (emirates) in Africa matters to jihadists, and when non-Muslim forces threaten them a global reaction ensues. For instance, when France intervened in Mali, threats to France came from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, as well as AQIM. This legacy of transnational jihadism and its growing impact on "local" groups, like Boko Haram, is precisely why AQIM is more dangerous than ever before.

However, itinerant jihadism does not only pose a security problem to the West. After the Casablanca bombing in March 2003, Morocco took aggressive action to counter radicalisation at home. In addition to making reforms within the country, Morocco established a Council of Ulema for Europe to train and send Moroccan imams and other spiritual guides to counter extremist messaging to North African expatriate communities in Europe.[70] Morocco, like other North African countries, is concerned about members of these communities being recruited and radicalised in the West, only to return to North Africa to fight. Indeed, many future AQ operatives began their militant careers as volunteers for war in Muslim lands—the original intent, for example, of the infamous Hamburg cell—and most jihadi groups historically are by-products of the mobilisations of foreign fighters.[71]

Another source of concern is the return of seasoned jihadists jailed abroad who could continue the struggle in North Africa. Aaron Zelin makes this point in a study that looks at Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya and Tunisia.[72] Some of these individuals were also listed in the Sinjar files collected by Coalition forces in October 2007. The moves of

these prisoners back to their host countries to serve out their prison terms raises the concern that some of these individuals may escape back into the foreign fighter pipeline.

Rising Tunisian extremists: a magnet for foreign fighters

Tunisia is another country of interest to AQIM, largely because of its weak Islamist government and the proficient social media apparatus, preaching and charitable organisations.[73] It acts as a magnet for itinerant jihadists, especially of North African lineage, bent on establishing zones of fundamentalist governance. The likelihood of fighters returning from Syria to Tunisia or elsewhere in the region to fight for AQIM's cause is high, much as Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG) veterans did upon their return from Afghanistan. Further, 11 of the 32 terrorists who attacked the Algerian gas plant in 2013 were Tunisians, and a Tunisian citizen, Ahmed Abassi, in the summer of that year was charged with involvement in the plot to derail a passenger train between Toronto and New York City.[74]

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Former TCG activists, some of whom are linked to the Tunisian Ansar al-Sharia (AST) and inspired by jihadist preachers like Kamel Zarouq, fuel the Tunisian reservoir of potential AQIM operatives. Zarouq and other extremist preachers are actively engaged in *dawa* (in this case, jihadist-Salafist proselytising and social services) in and around the Tunis area.[75] Zarouq's own words are instructive and speak to the supranational goals of AQIM and its Tunisian supporters: "Our goal is to support the Islamic nation, to support our religion, to elevate the sharia, and to spread the law of Muhammad. Our goal is to pull the nations out of darkness and into light. Our goal is to instate the sharia, and regain Andalusia and Jerusalem."[76]

On 12 May 2013, Abu Yadh, the extremist leader of Tunisia's Ansar al-Sharia, said much the same in a diatribe that threatened Tunisian authorities bent on

cracking down on Salafist activism. Accusing the authorities of waging "war against Islam"—a common jihadi accusation against regional governments—and recalling Tunisian jihadists' participation in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, Iraq, Somalia and Syria, Abu Yadh added that "these young people" are ready to give their lives to defend the Salafist project in Tunisia, saying: "Giving up our lives will not be a high price to pay if it is in response to our religion being attacked or our preaching being hindered."[77] After AST was accused of being part of the AQ network, the group confirmed its "loyalty and support" to the movement but went on to explain how it was organisationally independent.[78]

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

AQIM is the most notorious extremist network in the area. It is a principal source of terrorist violence and a backbone movement for the region, although it remains poorly understood and generally underestimated. This could be due to the fact that the organisation's shura council and leadership is located in Kabylia, in northern Algeria, and intelligence sharing by the host country is marginal at best. However, AQIM has been forming networks across the Maghreb and the Sahel for many years, and developing cells or cooperating in other ways with extremist factions like Boko Haram, the Boko Haram splinter group Ansaru, as well as various Tunisian and Libyan jihadists. The 2013 attack against the embassy of France in Tripoli and the failed attack against the British embassy illustrate that the Algerian jihadists and their local allies are not only capable, but also widely distributed. Indeed, the head of AQIM's notables' council, Abu Ubayda Youssef al-Annabi, last spring called for support in attacking France. This call echoed a common refrain of many other global jihadists—join the fight globally against Islam's oppressors—but it was very specific for AQIM and representative of its growing vision and, likely, reach.

AQIM's ability to leverage support and increasingly develop its narrative is where its strength lies. It may be confusing to speculate as to whether the group operates as a unified organisation, how it is divided into smaller franchises or the number of its followers. The important matter is the influence it wields to mobilise support from Islamists across the region, harness discontent and legitimise violent jihad against regional states and their Western supporters. This ability lends it a global character.

AQIM has been expanding and forging relationships across the Sahara and Sahel for years with significant implications for the region. These relationships go beyond North and West Africa, as the involvement of Canadians in the In Amenas attack demonstrated. After the latter attack, Mokhtar Belmokhtar's popularity grew among certain youth in North Africa. An example from social media provides one useful metric. A Facebook page called the "Derna Media Center" (DMC) gained 4,000 new "likes" in two weeks after the attack when Belmokhtar's photo was posted on the site and he was touted a hero (Facebook subsequently removed the page). This small example illustrates the potential attraction that AQIM is capable of generating within some regional segments.

In sum, AQIM is linked to almost all increasingly active jihadist networks across the region, even if by inspiration alone. Indeed, in the first part of 2013 alone we witnessed continued suicide attacks in Mali and the dismantling of two terror cells in Morocco (the "Al Mouahidoun" and "Attawhid" cells, according to news agencies, which had already carried out robberies to fund their activities and were believed to be in contact with jihadists in northern Mali).[79] Further, Egypt claims that it disrupted a terror plot against one or possibly two foreign embassies; Boko Haram has not stopped its relentless attacks in northern Nigeria; and an alleged Tunisian militant was arrested for apparently plotting against US and Canadian interests.[80] While some view these events as wholly disconnected, the common denominator tying them together is AQIM and/or its inspiration.

Maritime Security: The Impact of Disrupted Trade Flows on National Stability in West Africa

Maritime trade plays a crucial role in bringing West Africa's exports to the global market, providing regional governments with revenue. The region also relies on maritime trade for key imports such as diesel, gasoline, food and goods. Despite its strategic importance, maritime trade is poorly secured and subject to multiple criminal threats. Maritime crime has not disrupted critical trade flows to date, but the rise of Islamist militancy in the Sahel region raises the question of whether the threat of a severe disruption to trade flows is likely to increase.

West Africa's maritime trade flows range from agricultural exports to high-end imported consumer goods. The seaborne energy trade has the greatest regional significance. For example, Nigeria ships almost 2 million barrels of crude oil per day, earning US$50 billion a year, which accounts for 70% of government revenue. Crude oil plays a less significant role for other littoral states, but hopes are pinned on future discoveries. The region supplies 10% of the global demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is loaded at terminals in Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. The region also relies on shipping to import most of its gasoline and diesel due to a lack of local refining capacity.

The maritime domain is poorly secured despite its strategic importance. This is partly because of a lack of naval capacity, but equally due to corruption and wavering political interest. However, despite a recent spike in attacks, the piracy threat is not necessarily increasing. Control Risks, a security firm, recorded 123 incidents between January and December 2013, a 34% increase from the same period in 2012, but still below the level recorded in 2008.

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provocative, extended-duration hijackings are uncommon, and more sophisticated manifestations of the crime allegedly involve a degree of covert support from corrupt officials. Commercially minded West African pirates have few incentives to disrupt maritime trade and are likely to do so by accident rather than design.

A vulnerable energy trade?

The seaborne energy trade is more vulnerable to disruption: tanker vessels are generally more susceptible to a militant attack than sturdier bulk carriers and container ships. Although not completely halting trade, a successful attack on a tanker vessel would be likely to cause severe short-term disruption, as well as forcing shipping to adopt a radically different security posture and pushing up costs. Faced with rising insurance costs and mutinous crews, many shipping companies would cease West African trade. Even an unsuccessful attack, or a credible threat of an imminent attack, could have a significant impact on shipping patterns.

The potential for a disruptive attack on a crude oil tanker has attracted the most attention. This is likely to be because of the precedent set by the attack claimed by Al-Qaeda (AQ) on the *Limburg* off Yemen in 2002, and the possible impact on crude exporters, chiefly Nigeria, but also Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and, to a lesser extent, Ghana. Smaller tankers ply a more exposed coastal trade, but most crude is exported by very large crude carriers (VLCCs) that load their cargoes at secured terminals and gain special attention from regional navies because of their strategic trade.

Disrupting the crude oil trade by targeting offshore oil platforms is also relatively difficult. Security provisions around the region's offshore oil platforms have increased significantly since 2008 when Niger Delta militants attacked the Bongo offshore facility off Nigeria. Almost every major asset relies on field security measures that include armed security vessels and an "exclusion zone" for unidentified vessel traffic. A disruptive attack on a crude tanker or an offshore platform would thus require relatively sophisticated maritime capabilities.

An attack on an LNG tanker would also prove highly disruptive for the trade and cut into the state budgets of Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea. However, LNG tankers only call at highly secured terminals at Bonny (Nigeria) and Malabo (Equatorial Guinea), and they do not ply coastal

waters for long periods. Consequently, an attack on an LNG tanker would place high demands on the logistics, equipment and access of the assailants.

The import of gasoline and diesel is far more exposed to an attack. Product tankers that ply the region's waters spend extended periods at anchorages close to shore near coastal cities and have already proven easy targets for the region's pirate groups. Consequently, an attack would be far easier to carry out, placing fewer demands on the logistics, equipment and maritime capabilities of the attackers. While not directly affecting government revenues, an attack could temporarily halt West Africa's fuel supply, create severe shortages and devastate the region's economies in the absence of alternative fuel sources. Fuel supply and prices are highly sensitive issues, and a disruption could trigger significant civil unrest, undermining the already fragile legitimacy and stability of governments in the region.

Islamist ascendancy in the Sahel: far from the coast?

In addition to targeting offshore oil installations and vessels, Niger Delta militants sought in the past to disrupt Nigeria's fuel supply. In July 2009, militants affiliated with the ethnic Ijaw Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) destroyed the Atlas Cove fuel jetty in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos. The attack did not cause extensive economic disruption, though this was reportedly only because the country's fuel marketers had illicitly hoarded fuel. However, the Niger Delta militant threat has receded following a 2009 government amnesty scheme and the elevation of a southerner, Goodluck Jonathan, to the presidency in 2010.

A new potential threat has emerged with the rise of Islamist militant groups in the Sahel and Sahara region in recent years. However, Islamist groups are, for now, likely to have limited intent and capability to carry out a maritime attack and would be further restricted by environmental constraints. Although transnational terrorist groups with a global reach have become more interested in West Africa, it is not clear whether this extends to West Africa's maritime trade. The attacks on the *USS Cole* (2000) and the *Limburg* (2002) show that transnational groups take an interest in the maritime domain. However, whereas an attack in West Africa would have a significant regional impact and potentially cause some jitters in the global oil market, an attack on a tanker in the straits of Hormuz or Malacca

would have global reverberations for the energy trade. Considering the financial and logistical investment needed to carry out an attack in West Africa, an attack on a global maritime choke point would be likely to have a better pay-off.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other Islamist militant groups in the Sahel and Sahara have to date focused on land-based strategic targets. Sahel-based Islamist militants are geographically and socially distant from the region's coastal areas. As a result, they would need to build logistics networks and local support cells, as well as gain access to equipment and manpower with the maritime skills to launch an attack in a hostile environment. The symbolic impact of an AQIM attack on a maritime target would be significant. However, the real impact would firstly be felt by West African coastal states that, despite their involvement in Mali, are secondary players in the crisis. In this context, Sahel-based groups are likely to focus on strategic energy targets closer to home, as well as to provide support to domestic Islamist militant groups such as Nigeria's Boko Haram.

Nigerian Islamist militant threat

Boko Haram most likely poses the main threat to maritime trade in the region. The group's core area of influence is in northeastern Nigeria, where it has focused on domestic government and civilian targets. However, Boko Haram's strategic leadership will be aware of the precedent for carrying out attacks on energy infrastructure, vessels and offshore assets to apply pressure on the government. Local authorities claim that Boko Haram's reach is beginning to extend further south in the country. Suspected Boko Haram operatives were reportedly arrested in Lagos in March and July 2013. The suspects in the March crackdown reportedly had a list of potential targets that included a tank farm, where products such as gasoline are stored after being offloaded by product tankers.

However, Boko Haram will also face constraints in seeking to carry out a maritime attack. In general, the organisation of a maritime attack is far more complex than an onshore one, increasing the risk that authorities discover the operation in the planning phase. Moreover, Nigeria's southern coastal region is a hostile environment for the overwhelmingly northern group. Even in ethnically and religiously diverse Lagos, residents are alert to the presence of any "outsiders". The close-knit communities in the oil-rich Niger Delta region would be

an even more challenging environment for Boko Haram. Even if the group establishes a presence in Lagos, land-based strategic or civilian targets are easier to reach and likely to be at greater risk.

Boko Haram recruits are not renowned for their maritime skills, so gaining access to skilled manpower and equipment would present an additional challenge. Local pirate groups and Niger Delta militants have a surfeit of such skills and equipment, but the potential for Islamist militants to "hire in" operatives appears limited. Despite occasional alarmism, there are few indications of any social interaction between members of these groups, and Boko Haram and Niger Delta militants are on firmly opposing sides of Nigeria's increasingly fraught north-south political divide.

Despite these constraints, the targeting strategies, capabilities and support networks of the region's Islamist groups are evolving. The region's patchy maritime security provision is unlikely to pose a deterrent to determined attackers in the longer term. Product tankers, particularly those operating off Lagos or adjacent urban centres, may be more exposed in the short term. Even unsuccessful attempts are likely to have an impact on trade patterns as shipping responds to a new threat.

The resolve to target crude oil flows, including crude tankers or offshore platforms, and LNG trade flows is likely to increase if the region's groups manage to expand their capabilities and consequently set their sights higher. Considering the poor level of port security in the region, the main factor inhibiting an attack on a poorly secured port facility or smaller export terminal is the level of militant capability.

Islamist militants could also indirectly disrupt maritime trade. The future of the Niger Delta amnesty programme after the 2015 general elections is not clear, and Niger Delta militants have threatened to respond violently if Jonathan's government is targeted. An Islamist militant attack on the presidency or a mass casualty attack in the south could lead Niger Delta militants to take up arms again on a large scale, disrupting maritime trade.

Threats and Risks Facing Canadian Extractive Industries in High-Risk Foreign Jurisdictions

An increasing number of Canadian-based oil, gas and mining companies are involved in business ventures outside of Canada. The reasons are varied, including the raw materials they look to extract being located in diverse locations around the globe and the increased globalisation of business generally. Travel and communication no longer represent barriers to international businesses, and companies based in Canada can now stay in daily, real-time contact with operations world-wide.

Many locations around the world that experience high levels of poverty and unemployment have high levels of connectivity at all levels of society through mobile phones and other forms of communications. The technology and other technical skills and processes can be expected to continue to increase the capacity for businesses in Canada to grow into ever expanding regions around the world.

The business issues and problems encountered may be similar in nature to those experienced in Canada but take place in a commercial, social, economic and cultural milieu that is partly or wholly different from the Canadian environment. It is often difficult to understand the dynamics and context of the environment where a foreign subsidiary or entity is operating when measured and assessed against Canadian experiences and business practices.

Technical skills such as engineering and accounting have a universal quality. For example, an engineering solution to drilling an offshore well may have different challenges based on geographical location; however, the technical skills are not necessarily affected by the business, political or socio-economic conditions. Basic accounting processes and the skills required are similarly fundamentally universal; accounting staff trained and experienced in Canada can understand accounting records and transactions prepared in other areas of the world. When the technical skills and approach are similar, the risks associated with these areas are similar to those experienced in Canada.

Other areas of business risk including fraud, theft, physical security of assets and staff are often very much affected by the business and societal environment. Threats of physical violence or disruption of

operations will dramatically increase vulnerability to fraud and bribery and other unlawful or high-risk behaviours. Canadian experiences are not necessarily sufficient to understand the nature of the risk and, more importantly, develop strategies to mitigate those risks and protect employees and assets.

In recent years, there has been increasing pressure on the Canadian government to regulate and scrutinise the actions of Canadian businesses operating outside Canada. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations, among other international bodies, have increased the demands on Canada and other countries to ensure that businesses and individuals act lawfully and ethically in foreign jurisdictions. The *Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act* (CFPOA) is a Canadian act passed in 1999 and has been enforced since the mid-2000s. The act is similar to the *Foreign Corruption Practices Act* (FCPA) in the United States and the *United Kingdom Bribery Act* (UKBA). The CFPOA prohibits the offering, promising or payment of a bribe to foreign government official. As discussed in detail below, recent amendments to the act also require companies to maintain accurate books and records. Violations of the CFPOA may result in criminal convictions as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has exclusive jurisdiction for the act. There is currently no regulator or other government agency that deals with these matters.

To detect and mitigate the probability of fraud, theft, bribery or other unlawful acts, it is necessary to understand the associated risks. Dealing with an act of bribery or fraud where the motivation is to avoid a realistic threat of physical violence to an employee or their family is not typically considered in Canada and is remarkably different from a criminal act that is committed for financial gain. The divergent motivating factors will also affect the procedures and controls to manage and monitor the relevant control processes. For example, segregated sign-offs for approval and payment of a business expense is an effective control in Canada; however, this may not be sufficient in an environment where the threat is physical violence.

Countries that are controlled by oppressive regimes or unduly influenced by extremist groups are environments with which Canadian senior executives typically have limited or no experience. The requirements for physical security of personnel and assets become a high priority that requires specialised skills and experience to assess

and develop appropriate processes, training and controls. The threat of kidnapping a member of a senior executive is not an issue that Canadian companies are confronted with in Canada; it is therefore often difficult to understand the need to develop processes and measures necessary to mitigate the risk and protect personnel and assets around the world.

In countries with risks of this nature, financial controls, physical security procedures and asset security are key elements and equally important to an effective, sustainable compliance program. Organisations often require outside support to conduct risk assessments, to identify gaps and to develop effective controls, training and due diligence protocols. Companies may look to an experienced, diverse team that includes former law enforcement and intelligence personnel, regulators, forensic accountants and legal counsel to ensure that their controls and procedures address the environment in which they are operating. The team should include experienced staff from Canada and the country in which the Canadian company is operating to understand the risks, legal requirements and practical application of the company's programs in Canada and the foreign jurisdiction.

The impetus to develop and sustain an effective program has, for the most part, been at the discretion of the company until the relatively recent emphasis on the CFPOA. The act of bribery is a form of fraud and the same controls and considerations required to comply with the CFPOA apply to other criminal, regulatory, safety and security policies, procedures and processes.

As previously noted, the CFPOA prohibits the offering, promising or payment of money (or anything of value) to a foreign public official for improper advantage in obtaining or retaining business. The act applies to Canadian and foreign nationals and corporations and includes employees, contractors, agents, sub-contractors and other parties representing or seen to be representing a company.

Recent amendments to the act, which include elimination of the exception for facilitation payments and a books-and-records requirement, position the Canadian legislation at a higher standard than the FCPA and on par with the UKBA. The amendments include the following:

Books-and-records offence

- Separate offence created for concealing bribery in a company's books and records.

National jurisdiction

- Ability to exercise jurisdiction over all persons or companies that have Canadian nationality, regardless of where the alleged bribery has taken place.

Elimination of facilitation payments

- Eventual elimination of the exception currently granted for facilitation payments, which are payments made to expedite or secure the performance of acts of a routine nature.

Broader definition of "business"

- Removal of the term "for-profit" in the definition of business to ensure that the act applies to all businesses, regardless of whether or not they are for-profit.

Increased sentencing for individuals

- New maximum terms of imprisonment of up to 14 years for individual convictions pursuant to the CFPOA.

Exclusive ability of the RCMP to lay charges

- Exclusive authority of the RCMP to lay charges under the CFPOA.

Organisations need to demonstrate that their processes and procedures identify and address key areas of risks. Organisations and individuals will be held to the standard of not only what they knew but also what they ought to have known. It is no longer sufficient to rely on "that is just the way it is here".

The term "foreign government official" in the act is not limited to traditionally perceived officials of foreign governments (e.g. ministers). It may also include:

- An officer or employee of a foreign government;
- An officer or employee of a public international organisation (IMF, World Bank, etc.);
- A member of the military or of the royal family;
- Any person acting in an official capacity; and
- An officer or employee of a state-owned and/or controlled commercial enterprise.

It is common practice in the extractive industry to require foreign companies to partner with a state-owned entity. This, in combination with the government employees and agency officials with whom companies are required to interact to obtain permits, inspections and other operational approvals and activities, can result in all or most foreign nationals having a direct or indirect relationship with government officials. The circumstances in the foreign jurisdiction will dictate who is included under this definition.

Benefits that may be provided to a foreign government official are equally difficult to define and are not limited to "bags of cash". The act refers to "anything of value" which may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Lavish travel, entertainment and lodging;
- Side trips (e.g. while visiting a Canadian facility);
- Loans to government officials or their family members;
- Employment, promises of employment or internships for government officials or their family members;
- Forgiveness of debt;
- Equity interests;
- Improper charitable donations or political contributions; and
- In-kind services or donations.

While not prohibited by anti-corruption laws, gifts and entertainment remain a potential source of abuse. Transparency and prior planning are essential to mitigating compliance risks associated with gift-giving, travel, lodging, and entertainment. These items should be reasonable and not lavish for the foreign jurisdiction where they are provided. Companies need to be attentive to multiple gifts provided over a period of time and the value of the gifts, travel, lodging, and entertainment from the perspective of the recipient.

Third parties include agents, contractors, consultants, advisors and any other party that represents or is seen to be representing a Canadian interest operating in a foreign jurisdiction. Third parties have been identified as the one of the areas of highest risk for CFPOA compliance. To effectively manage and monitor third parties and their activities, it is essential to perform the following:

- Understand the activities of third parties and what specific services they are providing;
- Maintain detailed records relating to the retention of third parties;
- Ensure payments are made to approved third parties;
- Understand the documentation required in connection with the payment; and
- Understand the detail and services on the face of the invoice.

Third-party due diligence is critical to mitigating risks posed by third-party intermediaries. A due diligence file should be prepared and maintained.

Effective due diligence processes, procedures and documentation have become critical components of an effective and sustainable compliance program. The due diligence program not only applies when a company enters into a relationship with a third party; there must be ongoing and regular due diligence of third-party intermediaries. This process also forms part of pre- and post-merger procedures. Many companies in the extractive industry grow through acquisition and must be mindful that in addition to acquiring the assets of the acquired entity, they also inherit the history and actions of the entity (a concept referred to as "successor liability").

Establishing and maintaining a robust and comprehensive compliance program is necessary to monitor CFPOA compliance, address non-compliance and high-risk incidents and behaviours, manage physical security of personnel and assets, and clearly understand the social and political environment in a foreign jurisdiction.

As noted above, Canadian organisations and individuals operating outside Canada can expect to be subject to the CFPOA. What was once a matter of choice is now subject to Canadian law that sets expectations and standards for behaviours and actions of Canadian entities beyond Canada's borders.

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